

A WARRANT FOR YOUR APPREHENSION NO. 2235

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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***“The word of the Lord is against you.”
Zephaniah 2:5.***

The word of the Lord was against the land to which these words were spoken. The whole verse reads, “Woe unto the inhabitants of the seacoast, the nation of the Cherethites! The word of the Lord is against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy you, that there shall be no inhabitant.” This contest could have only one end, for behind “the word of the Lord” was the Lord Himself. “Woe unto him that strives with his Maker!” Who shall dare to oppose His sovereign will? All forces are at His command and they are foolish, indeed, who say to Him, “What are You doing?” I have not come here, however, to speak to you simply about the land of the Philistines and the sinners who dwelt there. The burden of my sermon is concerning men and women who are now living and to whom I may truthfully say, “The Word of the Lord is against you.” May you wake up to see the truth of this terrible sentence and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, be at once moved to flee from the wrath to come!

The Philistines were one of the Canaanite nations and they were so prominent that they gave their name to the whole country. Palestine was the land of the Philistines. These people had a fine physical development and among them were persons of unusual stature. There were giants in their cities—Goliath of Gath is the one most familiar to us because of his encounter with David—but there were many others. They were, moreover, a very warlike race. When God brought His people out of Egypt into the land of promise, the five lords of the Philistines were to be destroyed and their cities were to be taken by the Israelites. But they were not destroyed and neither were their cities captured, for the Israelites had not faith enough and the Philistines were men of courage and stubbornly defended their country. They even came to be the oppressors of Israel and, becoming a great and powerful nation, held the Hebrews in subjection for many a year. Even when Israel was strong and brought Philistia under tribute, the Philistines constantly revolted and harassed the Israelites. They were always against God and against God's people—and though Jehovah waited long and patiently, that they might have space for repentance, yet they repented not. When this prophecy was given, their cup was full. They had so sinned against God that, at last, the day of their doom came and

the Prophet Zephaniah, in the name of God, said to them, "The word of the Lord is against you."

I do not know that anybody else was against them. They were a people who feared nobody and, for many years, when they were attacked, first by one and then by another, they held their own. They had strongly-fenced cities, some of which stood, after the time of Christ, even in the age of the Crusaders, so that they had no reason to fear the other nations of the earth. They could maintain their rights against all comers and it seemed as if they would never be moved. But prosperity is often deceitful. Their fancied security was only like a thin crust over a lava bed—and the volcano lay beneath ready to burst forth at any moment.

They had one overwhelming cause for dread, though they knew it not. They could conquer all nations, but a foe was marching upon them, against which they would fight in vain. When the Prophet delivered the message, "The word of the Lord is against you," he rang the knell of their doom. What an adversary is this, "The word of the Lord"! This enemy is more powerful than Egypt, or Assyria, or any of the tribes of men on the face of the earth. It is more terrible, too, than the voice of the storm. Many times the Lord had thus scattered those that opposed themselves against Him—"The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice; hail stones and coals of fire. Yes, He sent out His arrows, and scattered them; and He shot out lightning and discomfited them." Those who have the Word of the Lord against them have an enemy to fear more dreadful than the most fearful convulsion of Nature, more terrible than the simoom of the desert, the sirocco of the plain, or the Euroclydon of the sea! The Prophet does not attempt to show the Philistines by what instrumentality God would break them in pieces, whether by plague, or famine, or pestilence, or war. He simply says, "The word of the Lord is against you." That is enough. He states the cause—the effects are sure to follow.

Today, as the result of the warfare mentioned in my text, Philistia is swept away and its cities are destroyed. Gaza and Ekron, Ashdod and Askelon have perished by the judgment of God. I have not time to give you the evidence of travelers to prove that the prophecy against them has been kept to the very letter. Where it seemed as if it had failed, there has been only a more complete fulfillment of the sentence against the Lord's enemies.

My main business at this time, is not, however, with the Philistines. God's Word is against a good many other people besides them and I am going to try to talk to some of them in words of solemn warning. My message to many must be, "The Word of the Lord is against you." Oh, that God may help me so to speak that your life may be changed and that the Word of God may be against you no longer! Hearken, then, to this word, you that are living in sin, you that are refusing the Savior, you that are delaying the time of repentance, you that have backslidden, you that are opposing the Gospel—"The Word of the Lord is against you." I would like to get hold of some man who is in this terrible condition of rebellion against God and hold him by the hand while I speak to him, in a kind and

friendly and fraternal way, this solemn word of warning—"The Word of the Lord is against you."

First, I shall simply state the general fact, that *it is so*—the Word of the Lord is really against many men and women. Secondly, I shall endeavor to make it clear that if you are living with the Word of the Lord against you, *it is a very terrible thing*. And, thirdly, if you are awakened to see your danger, I shall try to set before you *what can be done in the matter*.

I. First, concerning many people, my text is literally true, "the Word of the Lord is against you." It is so. Just as surely and as sorrowfully as we can say, today, that the law of England is against some of the people in England, we can affirm that the Word of the Lord is against many of the inhabitants of the earth. The Word of the Lord will not, *cannot* change—and there it stands, bearing testimony against many, who, in due time, unless they become partakers of the Grace of the Lord Jesus, shall be overwhelmed and destroyed without remedy!

I am quite sure that "the Word of the Lord" is against some of you, because *you are against the Word of the Lord*. There is war between you and this wonderful Book. You do not enjoy the reading of it, no, perhaps, you have even come to hate it! You oppose it—possibly you even wish there were no Bible. Perhaps you have been drinking in theories of Inspiration that make it to be practically no Bible—deposing it from its rightful position as a full and authoritative guide in all matters of faith and practice. If you do not accept it as such, you are against it! If this is true of you, I fear that it is because you do not understand the Bible. God's Word carries within itself the evidence of its Truth. It teaches men who are not encased in prejudice. It enlightens those who will open their eyes to see. You cannot be against it unless you have a clear suspicion that it is against you! The fact is, the Bible does not please you—it does not let you sin with impunity—it presents to you a way of salvation that does not pander to your pride, or flatter your intellect. Therefore, you do not like the Book. "The Word of the Lord is against you." Now, be you sure of this, that if you are against the Word of the Lord, it is because the Word of the Lord is against you.

Again, I am sure that the Bible is against you, for you do not care to read it. Your conscience will be with me when I urge this reason, for many of you know well that you have a strange distaste for the Bible. Can you tell me why, in some countries, Romanists are forbidden to read the Scriptures? Why do the priests or their emissaries take from the people the Bibles which the booksellers have scattered? The reason is to be sought for in the false teaching and superstitious observances of the Church of Rome! If you went into a shop to buy an article and the first thing that the man did was to turn down the gas or blow out the candle, you would say to yourself, "He is going to sell me bad wares and he does not want me to have too much light lest I should find him out."

The reason why the priest of the Catholic church is against the Bible is because the Bible is against *him*. Now it is just so with you. You would read the Book willingly enough if you were agreed with it, but because it is too truthful, too faithful and exposes your faults too much, therefore you

do not like it and you do not read it. How long is it since some of you have read even a *chapter* of Scripture? How long is it since you have thought over one gracious text? Oh, my dear Friends, if I probe you, if I press this matter upon some of you, it will be clear enough that the Word of God is against you, for you, yourself, know that it is and, therefore, do not read it. You do not want to be plagued by it. It condemns your sins. It disturbs your false security. It robs you of your sleep in evil. “The Word of the Lord is against you”—your neglect of the Word shows that this is true.

And truly the Word of the Lord must be against you, for it must be against sin and *you delight in sin*. If you live in sin and love sin, should God send you a Book to pacify your conscience in such a state? If that which is unjust, intemperate and unholy, is hidden in your heart, and is practiced in your life, would you expect the Holy Spirit to write a Book to help you on in such a way as that? It is blasphemy to think that it could be so! All through the Book sin is uniformly and universally condemned, from the day when Adam was driven out of the Garden because of his transgression, until the flood came upon guilty man because “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” On Sinai the same Truth was thundered out. This was the burden of the Prophets’ messages. The Word of God is always against sin and many times the warning is given, “The soul that sins, it shall die.” If you are a sinner steeped in sin, depend upon it that this Book is against you and ought to be against you. You could not wish it to be otherwise if you are a right-minded person. You will say, “Whatever I may be, I do not want the Bible tampered with, to make it suit my ungodly life, nor do I wish Holy Scripture to favor me in an evil pursuit.”

This Book must be against some of you because *you have refused Christ*. God has given His dear Son to die to save men. He has appointed the one way of salvation to be through faith in the precious blood of Christ. If you will not have the appointed way. If you refuse the ordained Savior, this Book may well quarrel with you, for you quarrel with God! What? The blood of His dear Son given to redeem and yet you reject it? Mercy dressed in crimson to save you and yet you fly from it? Love Incarnate in a bleeding Savior and yet you spurn it? Perhaps you imagine that you are good enough to be saved without Christ, but what infamous pride this is on the part of a poor sinful worm of the dust! Perhaps your whole confidence is in your own good works and you hope they will be found sufficient without the blood of Calvary—that is presumptuous arrogance and vain conceit for a man who is born in sin and shaped in iniquity! Truly “the Word of the Lord” cannot side with you!

If it is given to reveal Christ as the Savior of men, it cannot take the part of him who refuses that Savior, slights the blood of Christ and does despite to the Spirit of Grace. Oh, my dear Friend, when I used to read the Bible and had not yet looked to Christ, how sternly it used to speak to me! It had an angry look. It threatened me. It seemed to draw a sharp sword and thrust it into my heart! I bless the Bible for being severe with my unbelief! It was the wound of a friend which it gave me—when I was wounded, I fled to Christ for cure. If the Word of God were not against you

in your rejection of Christ, it could not be the Word of God and, if you did not know it to be against you, it would be an unhappy thing for you to be rocked in the cradle of unbelief and allowed to remain far from God without a warning. Until you believe in Christ, be you sure of this—"the Word of the Lord is against you!"

Even if you do not read God's Word and thus discover that it is against you, *your conscience tells you that it ought to be*. Many men and women who are sitting here, if they did but begin to think, would say, "I must be wrong. God's Book, which is Truth, itself, must be against me." Men will not allow conscience to speak, but if they do, it soon bears testimony in the same line as God's own Word, for you cannot very readily make your conscience a false witness. There are some who preach, today, that all men will be saved, whether they believe in Christ or not. I remember what a certain hearer said to a minister who preached that doctrine—"Sir, if what you have preached today is true, we do not need you. Indeed, we do not need any minister at all—we can get along all right without one. And if what you have preached is *not* true, we do not need *you*—so in either case we have no need of your ministrations." The hearer knew that what the minister had preached was not the Truth of God—conscience confirmed the declarations of the Word of God.

The Word of God would be true, however, whether conscience confirmed it or not, but conscience does tell men that it cannot be the same with the wicked as with the righteous—it cannot be the same with those who reject the Savior as with those who accept Him. You cannot silence that voice within the heart! A Unitarian minister who preached that wild doctrine of universal salvation which is so popular just now, once met an old-fashioned Baptist preacher who was not a well-educated man, but who had a crowded congregation—while his learned friend had only a dozen or two to hear him eloquently discourse. The Unitarian said, "I cannot make out how it is that there is such a difference in our congregations—you get so many to hear you, and I get so few. I preach a very pleasing doctrine. I tell the people that all will be right with them all at last. I do not worry them with any doctrines of repentance and faith and Atonement—and yet they will not come to hear me.

"You preach a very dreary doctrine and you tell the people that unless they repent they shall perish and be cast into Hell, and yet they crowd your place to hear you. How is that?" "Well," said the old man, "I think it is, my Friend, because they have a shrewd suspicion that what I say is true, and that what you say is not true." There he hit the nail on the head! It is so. The conscience of men bids them distrust the word which tells them that there will be no difference between the righteous and the wicked! God has somehow written on the heart of man this judgement—"Sin must be punished. It cannot be the same with the godly and the ungodly at the last." Hear that voice of your conscience! Listen to it and it will tell you that "the Word of the Lord is against you."

One thing more. You who live in sin and will not have a Savior may be sure that "the Word of the Lord is against you." *Your efforts to harden your heart prove it*. The struggle you have to make in order to keep all things

quiet within your own bosom leaves no room for doubt that, “the Word of the Lord is against you.” Sometimes, when you are being spoken to about your soul, you do not like it. You feel irritable. You make some jest, or you utter some blasphemy, or repeat some old worn-out slander to stiffen yourself to reject the Word of God. And when you get home it takes you all your time to press down the sparks which the Gospel has kindled in your heart! You are kept very busy trying to stamp them out, for you know that you have some inflammable stuff in your soul—and you are afraid that there will be a fire within. If you did not think the Word of God was against you, you would not have to make such a vigorous effort to prevent its having its due effect upon your mind! Oh, that you would yield, young man! Oh, that you would let God’s Word do its will with you, young woman! Oh, all you of whom it is true—“The Word of the Lord is against you”—I pray that you would let it break you in pieces, wound you, kill you and then make you alive and heal you!

II. In the second place, I want to say that if “the Word of the Lord is against you,” IT IS A VERY TERRIBLE THING. When the word of Pharaoh was against the Israelites, they suffered cruel bondage, but the Word of the Lord was stronger than the word of the mighty despot—and when He spoke by Moses and Aaron, His people were brought out free. When the word of King Saul was against David, he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains. But the Word of the Lord was confirmed to him and he was delivered from the hand of his enemy and, at last, seated on the throne. When the word of Nebuchadnezzar was against the three Hebrew youths, they were cast into the burning fiery furnace—but the Lord delivered them, as He also delivered Daniel when the word of Darius was against him. But when “the Word of the Lord is against you,” its judgment is more to be dreaded than the bondage of Egypt, more to be feared than the fiery furnace or the den of lions, for there is none that can deliver you from the power of the Lord, whose Word has gone forth against you. If this is your case, you are truly in a terrible state!

If “the Word of the Lord is against you,” you have great cause for trembling, for *it cannot be bribed*. Many a wealthy man has escaped the punishment he deserved because he has used his silver and his gold judiciously. It cannot be so easily done, now, in this country, as it used to be, though there is still a gift that blinds the eyes and many a man of position has escaped his deserts because of his wealth. But you cannot bribe the Word of God, though there are some who seem to try to do it! They live a whole life regardless of God and His Word, amassing money by fair means or foul, and then, when they cannot use it further, they leave it for some religious purpose in the hope of thus meriting favor with God, taking care all the while, generally, to have their own name lastingly associated with the gift! But there is nothing which you can give that will be taken by the Word of the Lord as a payment for your wrong. It will speak and it will effect its purpose in spite of all your bribes!

If “the Word of the Lord is against you,” you may well be dismayed as you remember that *it will never be changed*. You cannot, by any possibility, so long as you are what you are, make it cease to be against you! If a

man is against me, today, he may be my friend tomorrow. The wind does not always blow from the same quarter. Tides that flow will also ebb, but God's Word never changes. From everlasting to everlasting it never turns an inch aside from the straight path. If you remain the same and that Word is against you, it will be against you in life and against you in death—against you at the Day of Judgement—and against you through all eternity. Oh, my dear Hearer, it is a dreadful thing to have this immutable, unchanging Word of God against you!

It is a terrible position, again, to have the Word of the Lord against you because *it cannot be escaped*. You may get away from the Queen's writ by flying to the Continent. You may escape a warrant of arrest by fleeing to certain countries, though I scarcely know where you can *now* go—but how can you escape from the Word of God? That Word changed chaos into order! That Word came into the thick darkness and there was light! "He spoke, and it was done." The Word of the Lord can come into your bed-chamber. If you journey to the ends of the earth, the Word of God can find you out, even though you never read it! It can reach you even if you should become a seven-fold infidel! You cannot change the threat by disbelieving it, nor escape the vengeance by professing that there is no such thing! The Psalmist's words about God's Omnipresence apply, also, to the Word of the Lord—"Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your Presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, You are there. If I make my bed in Hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Your hands lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me." The Word of the Lord is everywhere—it cannot be escaped.

Furthermore, it is a terrible thing to have the Word of the Lord against you, for *it cannot be resisted*. If a man is against you, you can fight it out with him. You may oppose force to force and cunning to cunning—but if the Word of the Lord is against you, what power have you? By His Word were the heavens made! By His Word the heavens and the earth shall pass away and be dissolved! How can you fight against the Word of God? As well might Pharaoh fight with the plagues that Jehovah sent upon him. God's Word is too strong for you. "Woe unto him that strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth," but strive not you with Him who has all power and whose Word is "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

And now let me speak to you very solemnly. If "the Word of the Lord is against you," *what a state you must be in*, for God is Love and He will not say a word against a man if He can help it. God is gracious, tender, loving—and when God Himself has to be against a man, the condition of that man's heart must be something very terrible—his state of life must be so depraved as to demand that Love should give place to Justice. Why, this Book of God was written for sinners, written to cheer penitent hearts, and if *it* is against you, what a state you must be in! Here is food prepared for an invalid—if you cannot eat it—if it turns your stomach, how diseased

you must be! If the medicine becomes poison; if the sweet is sour; if the Light of God, itself, is darkness to you, O wretched madman, you have come into an evil plight, indeed! God have mercy upon you! If God's Word is against you, you are in an awful state, indeed!

Not only is this true, but *what a sad state you will soon be in!* Whether you believe it or not, you will soon be dead and, dying, you will pass into another world. And, being there, you will come to the seat of judgment to be tried for the things done in the body. You will need witnesses in your favor and this Book will be called to give its testimony. What will it say about you? If the Book could speak, it would say, "Great God, he never read me! I bear witness to his neglect of You, for he never read me." And many a text of Scripture would rise up in that last day and say, "I was preached to him! His mother quoted me to him. His sister wrote this in a letter. A friend sent him this verse and pleaded with him to take it to heart, but he heeded none of them." If "the Word of the Lord is against you," the Law of God will say, "He knew me and he broke me!" The Gospel will say, "He knew me and he refused me!" The Bible, itself, will say, "He understood something of me, but he ridiculed me."

It will go hard with a man who has such testimony against him at the bar of the Great Judge. Let me have the Bible on my side and I will fearlessly face the whole world. But if the Bible is against me, I must be conquered. If it is against me in the Last Day, I must be speechless. He whom the Word condemns has the foretaste of that final condemnation which shall be his in the next state unless, by Sovereign Grace, he shall be constrained to turn to God before it is too late! I cannot speak as I would on this awful theme, but I am trying to plead with you from my very soul. Oh, that God the Holy Spirit would send home the Word of God to many!

Remember, my dear Hearers, there is not a wasted word in this Book. Whatever God says will happen to the ungodly, will happen to them. Judgment is God's strange work, but what He threatens, He will certainly perform. How terrible will it be when the threats of His Word come to pass! See, even in the verse from which our text is taken, a glimpse of what it may mean. First, there is woe. "Woe unto the inhabitants of the seacoast." Then there is destruction, "I will even destroy you." When the woe is past, there is utter destruction—"There shall be no inhabitant." Oh, the woe of having the Word of the Lord against you! Behold, again, how those cities which Christ would have blessed so highly were cursed when they rejected His message. "Woe unto you, Chorazin! Woe unto you, Bethsaida! Woe unto you, Capernaum!" These repeated, "woes," sound like a funeral knell! Today those cities are wholly swept away because the Word of the Lord was against them.

Learn, also, from the history of Jerusalem, how surely the Word of the Lord against a man or against a city is fulfilled. Christ was rejected by the people of Jerusalem, so that it is not surprising that, "when He was come near, He beheld the city and wept over it," for He knew what a terrible doom awaited the guilty capital. Well might that demented man, of whom Josephus tells us, go through the streets of the city, when it was being besieged by Titus, and call out in tones of horror, "Woe, woe to Jerusa-

lem!” Rest assured that the Lord will “render to every man according to his deeds.” Those who obey His Word shall be forever blessed. But those who have the Word of the Lord against them shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.

I have been accused, sometimes, of picturing the wrath to come in too horrible a way, but I have never described it more sternly than Christ, Himself. It was His gentle lips that declared, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” It was He who spoke of a place “where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.” It was He who uttered the most awful words about the wrath to come. I pray you, do not wish to know, in your own experience, all that “the wrath to come” may mean! Flee from it! Seek rather to know what *salvation* means—and God help you to obtain it even now! If I am addressing any person who feels that the Word of God is against him, I do beseech and conjure him not to rest any longer in that condition! If you have a quarrel with God’s Word, *you are wrong!* God’s Word cannot be in error. If the Word of God offends you, you must be offended, or, rather, you have offended against it. It will never beg your pardon—you must beg its pardon, or, rather, seek forgiveness from the Lord whose Word is against you, and who is, Himself, also against you! Said I not truly that when “the Word of the Lord is against you,” it is a terrible thing? If that is your position, may it soon be changed!

III. Now I come to my third and last point. If it is true that “the Word of the Lord is against you” and that it is a terrible thing to be in such a state, **WHAT CAN BE DONE IN THE MATTER?** Is there any way of escape, any loophole through which deliverance may come? If the Word of God cannot be bribed, changed, escaped, or resisted, what are we to do, since we cannot sit calmly beneath the curse of God?

I think that the first thing to be done, if you would escape out of this direful position, is to *confess that you are wrong*. There is a writ out against you. You have run away from it. Come home! Submit yourself to the court. Be willing to be put under arrest. There is no other right course. I knew one who, being charged with embezzlement, fled the country. He still has to stay away. If he had submitted himself to whatever punishment might have come upon him, he would have passed through it long ago. But now he still remains under the censure of the law and cannot return. Now, you runaway from God, come home at once! Sinner, against whom the Lord has issued His warrant, yield yourself to the officer of Divine Justice at this moment! You need not move from your present position—but just where you are—humbly whisper in your heart, “Lord, I am guilty. I submit to Your Word. Whatever Your Word says, is true, and I will no longer fight against it. But here, bowing my head, I confess that the wrong is with me, not with Your Word. I confess that.” Have you made this confession? Then it is well, for if, “the Word of the Lord is against you,” your only hope lies in taking the side of the Word of the Lord and against yourself!

But when a man gives himself up to justice, he has next to stand his trial. If “the Word of the Lord is against you,” it is against you in your pre-

sent position, in your present character and you must *change your position*. Come, then, and escape the hostility of the Word of the Lord by altering your attitude towards it! If you have loved sin, repent and hate it. May God the Holy Spirit work in you a loathing of evil things which the Word condemns, for when you are no longer a sin-lover, but a sin-loather, the Word that was against you will be for you! God has no thunderbolts for those who hate their sins. If your soul and sin are divorced, your soul and mercy may be married, but not otherwise. When you give up your sin, God will give up His suit against you. If you turn not, He will whet His sword—but if you turn, He will sheathe that sword and speak comfortably to you.

Another change must take place. You must no longer stand in yourself, but in Another. The Word of the Lord is against you, but what if you could change places with Another, on whose side the Word of the Lord is, and in whom you could lawfully and rightly stand? What if Christ stood in your place and you should stand in Christ's place? Then this Word would not condemn you, but it would acquit you! And more than that, it would defend you against all your adversaries. Behold a miracle of mercy! Christ Jesus, the innocent Son of God, dies for the guilty sons of men, that they may be covered with His righteousness and accepted in His name! This is the pith and marrow of the Gospel—"I stand in Christ's place because He stood in mine. The Law cannot be against Him, for He fulfilled it and made it honorable. The Word of the Lord cannot be against Him, since He hid it in His heart, that He might not sin against God. And if I come to be in Him, where the Word is hidden, it can no longer be against me."—

***"Confounded, Lord, I wrap my face,
And hang my guilty head,
Ashamed of all my wicked ways,
The hateful life I've led.
I yield—by mighty love subdued;
Who can resist its charms?
And throw myself, by wrath pursued,
Into my Savior's arms."***

Let me say to you further, that if you have, up to now, had the Word of the Lord against you, *be very careful to be right with the Word*. In seeking to be saved, avoid, above everything, a sham salvation. When a man has a bad sore, it is a mischievous thing to let it heal with proud flesh in it. To cover over a wound may be to create seven dangers instead of one. Come to the Word of God and search yourself. Use the lances, take the probe, examine into the depth of your wound and sore. Let your prayer be, "O God, let me never be comforted apart from Your Word. Let me have no foundation apart from Christ to build upon! Let me never think that I am saved unless Christ is my Savior." My dear Hearer you would be better off hungry than to eat poisoned meat! And you would be better off in despair than get comfort that does not spring out of the Word of God! If you think that you are saved and yet find that "the Word of the Lord is against you," you may be sure that you are *not* saved and should hasten to cast away your false confidence as quickly as possible! You can never be saved unless you are right with the Word of God—

***“This is the judge that ends the strife,
Where wit and reason fail.
My guide to everlasting life
Through all this gloomy vale.”***

One more thing and I have done. If to have the Word of God against you is an overwhelming calamity, *how happy are they who have the Word of the Lord with them!* I have heard of two Romanists, a man and his wife, who purchased their first copy of the Scriptures. The man began to read it and, one night, as he sat beside the fire with the open Book, he said, “Wife, if this Book is right, we are *wrong*.” He continued reading and a few days afterwards he said, “Wife, if this Book is right, we are *lost*.” More eager, now, than ever to see what the Word of the Lord was, he studied the Book until, one night, he joyfully exclaimed, “Wife, if this Book is true, we are *saved*.” The same word that showed them that they were undone, revealed also the Gospel of salvation! This is the glory of the Word of God—it is against us until it leads us out of our sins and then we find that death becomes the gate of life to our souls—and the Word of God is on our side!

The same Word that reveals the terrors of the Lord, also says, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” I believe on the Son of God as my Savior, therefore I have everlasting life! The Word of the Lord is now for me and assures my deliverance. It further says, “God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world, through Him, might be saved.” When I read this, my heart sings for joy, for the Word of God which was against me, now justifies me! Again it says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” As I tremble because it is written, “He that believes not shall be damned,” I rejoice because the same Word says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” I believe, and I have been baptized—therefore I am saved! If you have the Word of God for you, you need no other advocate. Even your own conscience may be lawfully overridden by the Word of the Lord. “If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knows all things.”

This is the sum of the whole matter! Come just as you are and trust Christ as your Savior! Leave your sin and seek after holiness. Have done with your own willfulness and seek the meek and lowly mind that was in the Man of Sorrows. In a word, come and lie at Jesus’ feet and lift your tearful eyes to His loving gaze, and say—

***“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Your kind arms I fall.
Be You my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my All.”***

Trust Christ! Trust Him now! Trust Him only! Trust Him wholly! Trust Him forever and you shall be eternally saved! As surely as the Bible is true, you are safe for time and for eternity if you believe in Jesus!

God bless this feeble word of mine! I have tried to preach the Word of God faithfully, that, at the day of account, I may be clear of the blood of all men. I shall not, then, be asked whether I spoke eloquently, or whether I had energy of mind or power of voice—but I shall be asked if I warned you to escape from sin and seek the Savior! And that, by the Grace of God, I have done to the utmost of my power. I wish that I knew how to

persuade men to seek the Lord. Oh, that I could learn the art of reading the hearts of men! What do you want with fine speeches? Escape for your lives! What do you want with polished phrases and rounded periods? “Lay hold on eternal life.” Repent! Believe the Gospel and be saved! O God, the Holy Spirit, lead men to this blessed decision at this very moment, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Jeremiah 26.*
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—501, 520, 589.**

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

BELOVED READERS—This sermon was preached with great anxiety for the souls of those who heard it. And now that it comes forth from the press, I again lift my heart to God with the prayer that it may awaken many who are slumbering in indifference. Believing readers will greatly oblige me if they will place their copies in the way of persons for whose salvation they are pleading with God. It may be that the Lord will use this discourse to the end they so much desire. My silent Sabbaths breed in me a great hunger for the salvation of those to whom I can only speak through the press. Oh, that my Lord would honor me by making me fruitful in this winter of my weakness!

I have a word for this season which I must not forget. Christmas is near. Our orphan children must have their festival, though I cannot have the joy of presiding at it. Will my kind friends remember my family of 500, keep up the general funds, and add some little treat for the boys and girls?

I am sending a Christmas letter to all the subscribers whose names we have on our list, but as we may miss some, let them not feel that they are left out. I invite their thoughtful consideration of the matter. Direct to the Secretary, Stockwell Orphanage, Clapham Road, London, and thus gratify Your old friend,

C. H. Spurgeon,

Mentone, December 12, 1891.

[Brother Spurgeon went Home to the Christ he loved so much on January 31, 1892—EOD.]

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

AN INDICTMENT WITH FOUR COUNTS NO. 1580

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

***“She obeyed not His voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to her God.”
Zephaniah 3:2.***

HERE ARE FOUR heavy counts of a terrible indictment against Jerusalem and the Jewish people. Is it not sad to reflect that Jerusalem was the city of the great king and yet fell from its high estate? It was the place of the great Temple—there the light of God shone forth while other nations were in darkness—there the solemn worship of God was celebrated while false gods were being adored elsewhere! And yet its sin provoked the Lord till He gave it up to the Destroyer. It is clear, therefore, that no degree of Light and no amount of privilege can keep a people alive and right before God. If the *heart* is not changed, if the Grace of God goes not with outward ordinances, those who are exalted to Heaven may yet be cast down to Hell.

The putrefaction of the best produces the worst and when a city which has been favored as Jerusalem has, become a den of unclean beasts, then it is a den, indeed! Neither Nineveh, nor Babylon, nor Tyre, nor Sidon could equal in criminality this once chosen city of the great king. Let us not, therefore, as a nation, begin to exalt ourselves because of our privileges, for if we do not prove worthy of them, the candlestick will be taken out of its place and our darkness will be all the darker because of the Light of God we have lost. If we walk not before the Lord obediently, it may please Him to make this island as great a scene of destruction as the mounds of Babel or the rock of Tyre.

We usually take Jerusalem to be the type of a church and it is one of the fullest types of the one true Church—“Jerusalem which is above, the mother of us all.” We may therefore regard the fate of Jerusalem as being a special warning to churches. In a Church is God’s dwelling place—there is the Light of knowledge, there is the fire of sacrifice—out of it has God shined. But a Church may sadly decline. There is a church which is now worthy of the name of Antichrist—she went further and further astray till she has made a *man* to be her head and called him infallible! She has set up many lords and gods, saints and saintesses and innumerable objects of worship—even bones and rotten rags! There is a church against whom this indictment might be laid today—“She obeyed not His voice”—she did not hear the Gospel!

“She received not correction”—when Reformers came she sought their blood. “She trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to her God, but she went after others and set up other intercessors than Christ and rejected the true Head of the Church. Other churches may fall into the same sin

unless they are guarded by spiritual power. Remember Laodicea and how she was spit out of the mouth of Christ because she was neither cold nor hot! Remember Sardis which had but a few names in it that were undefiled! Where are those cities and those churches, now? Let desolation answer. It might be said of them as of Gilgal, of which the Lord said, "Go you there to the place where My name was at the first, and see if there is one stone left of it upon another which has not been cast down."

Oh that we as a Church and all our sister Churches may walk before the Lord with holy jealousy as to doctrinal correctness, practical holiness and inner spiritual life! But, if not, our end will be miserable failure! If the salt of Divine Grace is not in a Church it cannot be an acceptable sacrifice to God, nor can it long be kept from the corruption which is natural to all masses of flesh! What are one people more than another? And what is one community more than another? We are men by nature, prone to the same evil, and we shall fall into the same transgression unless the Lord that keeps Israel shall keep us—and therein is our confidence—that He does neither slumber nor sleep.

This text is not only applicable to a nation and to a Church, but to *individuals* among God's own people, though, of course, only in a degree. Some of God's people follow Christ afar—their spiritual life is better seen in their *fears* than in their confidences! They are always trembling. Their hands are slack, their hearts are faint. We trust they are alive unto God, but that is all we can say. I fear it may be said of them, "She obeyed not His voice"—the gentle whisper of Divine Love falls upon a deaf ear. Oh, how often, Brothers and Sisters, has God spoken and we have not hearkened so as to obey His voice!

I fear, too, that there are times when we have not "received correction"—when affliction has been lost upon us. We have risen from a sick-bed worse than when we went to it! Our losses and crosses have provoked us to murmuring rather than to heart-searching. We have been bruised as in a mortar among wheat with a pestle and yet our folly has not departed from us. And this is a very provoking thing—when we despise the rod and the hand that uses it—and turn not at the smiting of the Lord. Yet it is so with some of God's people—they obey not His voice, they receive not correction and, therefore, it comes to pass that at times "they trust not in the Lord." They try to bear their trials themselves. They go to friends for advice and they inherit a curse, for it is written, "Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm."

They get into a withered state like the heath in the desert. They see not when good comes because they trust in man. Must not some of us plead guilty here? To add to our faults, whenever we have backslidden we have "not drawn near to the Lord our God." The joy and the strength of the Christian life are found in living near to God, living like sheep close to the shepherd, never wandering, but lying down in green pastures to which He leads the way, Himself, better than the pasture, our joy and our delight! But, alas, it may be said of some, "You have restrained prayer before

God.” “Are the consolations of God small with you? Is there any secret thing with you?”

Your transgressions and your iniquities have hidden your God from you! He walks contrary to you because you walk contrary to Him. This is too, too often the case with even those who trust in Jesus and have passed from death unto Life—and whenever it is the case, it means sorrow. He that is no child of God, but a hypocrite, may wander as far from the path of integrity as he chooses without having to suffer for it till the last day. But a child of God cannot sin without smarting for it. Is it not written, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for your iniquities”? Our Father whips His own children! The boys in the streets may do as they please, but our great Father is sure to chasten those He loves. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent.”

At this time I do not intend to use the words of our text in any of those ways, but to take it as it may refer to unconverted persons, for it very clearly, without the slightest strain, describes many who are living far away from God and I shall want you to give me your attention for a little time while I notice four great sins. When these are mentioned I shall try to dig into the text to bring out of it four hidden consolations—they are not apparent on the surface—but when faith applies the microscope and looks into the center of the text, it discovers four things by which the penitent sinner may be encouraged to come to Christ.

I. First, here are FOUR MANIFEST SINS. I wonder whether the fact that my text is in the feminine is intended, in the Providence of God, that this sermon may be especially adapted to a woman? I cannot tell, but I should not wonder. I may have been moved to this text on purpose that some poor wandering sister may feel as if God specially directed it to her sex. It says *she*—“She obeyed not His voice.” Whatever belongs to any of our race may be taken by all, since in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female. However, I point out the fact and pray God that His Word may be directed as He wills by the Holy Spirit.

The first sin is not hearkening to God’s voice. Many have *never* hearkened to God’s voice throughout a long life. They have heard it—they could not help that—but they have never given heed. They have never lent an attentive ear, saying, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.” He has spoken to many here present in warnings. He has said, “My daughter, if you do this, it will lead you to grief and sorrow. If you remain hard and careless, it cannot end well. Nothing can be right at the last which is not right now—wrong must bring woe with it.” Sometimes this warning has come home into the heart but the person of whom I am speaking has stifled it and said, “No, but I will go after my own way and follow my own pleasure.”

That warning has come, perhaps, in the silence of the night or in the very midst of the sin. A something that checked, a pulling of the rein—but the sinner could not be held in, no, not with bit nor bridle—he has taken the bit between his teeth and dashed on in sin! Oh, remember, you that have neglected Divine warnings—you may have forgotten them, but God

has not! When you who love your children have spoken to them and warned them, they may have gone their way and quite forgotten “what mother said,” but mother remembered it. Her tears flowed and wrote the memorial of her rebukes upon her face. And God forgets not warnings He has tendered to the sons of men.

I address some, however, who have not only received warning and rejected it, but they have received much teaching. You were in a Sunday school class while yet a girl. You knew the plan of salvation very early in life and you know it now, but still you have not obeyed the voice. There is Christ, but you have not touched His garment’s hem. There is the Fountain filled with blood of which you have been accustomed to sing, but you have never washed in it. There is the Bread of Life, but you have never fed on it and, in consequence, you live not unto God. Oh, it is a sad thing when it can be said, “She obeyed not His voice.”

To some who are here present, God’s voice has come by way of expostulation. There are many expostulations in the Word of God such as this—“Turn you, turn you; why will you die, oh house of Israel?” “Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” “Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He has torn and He will heal us; He has smitten, and He will bind us up.” “Say unto Him, take away all iniquity, receive us graciously, and love us freely.” Some of you had many such expostulations addressed to your heart and conscience, but you have not obeyed His voice. And then at the back of this have come invitations, sweet invitations. In the Bible you have read them; in hymns you have sung them; from the pulpit you have heard them; from kind friends you have received them.

Oh, how sweetly does Jesus bid the hungry and the thirsty come to Him; the heavy laden and such as are bowed down, to come and find rest in Him! You used to feel, at one time, as if you would yield to these invitations. But you did not and this sin lies at your door, a stumbling block in the way of your peace—“She obeyed not His voice.” When men fail to do right, they usually commit the wrong which is the reverse of it. You have listened to other voices, the siren voice of temptation has enchanted you, the voice of flattery has puffed you up, the voice of Satan has beguiled you, the voice of the flesh has fascinated you, the voice of the world has wooed you and has held you captive.

While we lay this indictment before you, some of you cannot help saying, “He means *me*. It is even so with me.” The Lord give you repentance and open your ears, for is it not written, “Incline your ear and come unto Me; hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David”? Oh, Divine Spirit, let not men be deaf any longer, but touch them with Your finger that they may hear the voice of God and live!

That is the first count of the indictment and the second one is like unto it and grows out of it—“she received not correction.” When men refuse God’s voice, they soon become more hardened and reject His correction like a horse which does not answer to the rein and, by-and-by, even kicks

at the whip and will not be ruled at all. The Lord's correction comes to us, sometimes from His word, when He speaks in anger and reminds us that His wrath abides on the man that believes not in Christ. Oh, there are heavy tidings from the Lord for you that are impenitent! This Book is not a book to play with, it is full of the terrors of the Lord against such as go on in rebellion against Him!

Perhaps you have been made to tremble as you have read your Bible and have seen how the Lord pronounces a solemn curse against the man that goes on in his iniquity. But the correction may also have come to you from your own conscience, quickened by the Word of God. You have come to be uneasy. You start in your sleep with dreams that alarm you. If you are as I once was, everything you look upon seems to have a mouth to accuse you! I remember when the Lord's corrections were very heavy upon me. I could not see a funeral but what I wondered when I, too, should be carried to the grave. I could not pass a churchyard without the reflection that I should soon be there and when I heard the passing bell, it seemed to tell me that I should soon be judged and condemned, for I had no hope of pardon. These are corrections of God and I pray you regard them.

Possibly, however, you have endured affliction. You are not well. You have been made to look into eternity through death's door. Perhaps one or another of your friends has died. You now wear the garb of mourning. God has corrected you. You have had a loss which you thought you could scarcely survive, it was so severe. "Despise not you the chastening of the Lord," but hear His rod and listen to what He has to say to you in it. Remember, God may smite you worse than He has done, for these few aches and pains He can find something more sharp and smarting. If one child has gone, He can take another, even from your breast! If one relative has died, another may follow, for the great Archer has many arrows in His quiver and when one suffices not, He speedily wings another in its painful flight. I pray you beware and let it not be said of you, "She received not correction," or, "He received not correction," but may you be willing to listen while God is thus dealing with you.

This leads to a third crime, in which lies the very essence of deadly sin—"She trusted not in the Lord." She would not come and trust in Christ for salvation! She would believe in her *own* righteousness. She would not trust in Christ to help her to overcome sin. She said she was quite able to purify herself. Oh, many a young man has started fair for Heaven to all appearances, but it has been in his own strength and, like Pliable, he has no sooner stumbled into the Slough of Despond than he has turned his back on the heavenly city and returned to the place from which he set out. Beware, I pray you, of having anything to do with a hope that is not based upon trust in God in Christ Jesus! Your religion is vanity and an insult to high Heaven unless it is based on the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Where there is no faith in Jesus, peace is presumption. He that dares to hope till he has believed in Christ, hopes in vain.

But ah, there are some who are driven to do many apparently gracious things—but yet this one thing they will not do—they will not trust in the

Lord. I have known this to be sadly the case with some in great affliction. She did not trust in the Lord—she was a widow, but she did not trust in the Lord! She had many little children. She knew not where to find them bread, but she did not trust in the Lord! She was sick and ill, herself, but she trusted not in the Lord. She was laid at death's door. She was in the infirmary, in the hospital—but she trusted not in the Lord. Her heart was very heavy and she said she wished she could die, but she trusted not in the Lord! Her friends did not help her—those who ought to have been kind were cruel. But she trusted not in the Lord! She was driven into a corner and yet she did not trust in the Lord.

Yes, and this is a great sin, for surely God takes away our props and dependences on purpose that we may throw our whole weight on Him! But there are some who will have nothing to do with this trusting, neither for time nor for eternity, neither for body nor for soul. Woe unto any man, be he even a child of God, if he once gets off the pathway of *faith*, for when we walk by *sight* we shall see things which shall make us wish we were blind! Only when we trust shall we be able to say, "I am not confounded nor ashamed, nor shall I be, world without end." This is sad—"She trusted not in the Lord."

The fourth crime was, "She drew not near to her God." There was no *prayer*. There was much talk about her trouble; much talk about what she would like to do—but there was no asking of God, no going into the chamber and spreading the case before Him and pleading His mercy. There was no thought of God! The mind did not get near to Him. The desires rambled round in a thousand devious paths, but did not come to God. Oh, it is hard to get some of you to think of God! I try and preach as best I can and try to find striking words to make you think of God, but, oh, how often do I fail! The choicest ways I use defeat themselves! May it not be so now! Let it not be said of you any longer that "she drew not near to her God." We ought to think of Him! We ought to seek Him! We ought to come to Him as little chicks when there is a hawk in the air and they hear the call of the mother hen—they are soon hidden away under her feathers!

We ought to run in prayer, that it might be true of us, "He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust: His truth shall be your shield and buckler." If you had a child that in its troubles ran out into the street and when its little heart was heavy went away to strangers and never told father or mother its sorrow, you would feel very hurt. This is God's quarrel with His rebellious people, that they will go to Satan, himself, before they will come to Him! No, think not that I run too far and use an extravagant expression, for Saul did this when God answered him not. He offered no penitent petitions, but resorted to a *witch* for help! Many would penetrate into the recesses of the unseen world and tamper with spiritual mysteries sooner than they will go to God. Silly women will believe a fortune teller, but will not trust the Savior. Is it so with any of you? Then let this word of accusation sink deep and confess your transgression unto the Lord!

Putting the four sentences together—“She obeyed not His voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to God”—what then? Why, “woe unto her!” Read the first verse of the chapter and there you have it. As I was coming here that word, “woe,” “woe,” “woe,” seemed to ring in my ears and I wondered where it came from. I will tell you. It is a word that goes to be made into a worse word. Let me pronounce it for you, “woe”—and that leads to something woe-erse—worse! And to the woe-erst the worst of all. It is bad, lamentable, destructive, ruinous, painful, wretched, miserable woe, worse, worst! I wish I could pronounce the word as my Master did when He said, “Woe unto you, Bethsaida; woe unto you, Chorazin; woe unto you, Capernaum.” I should hardly like to say it as He did, for He had a Light to judge which I have not—“Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,” and so on.

But that, “woe,” as He pronounced it must have sounded terribly, softly, sadly, sternly piercing to the heart! Ah, how will the angels sound it at the last? Hear it now, lest you hear it at the last! “One woe is past and, behold, another woe comes!” When the Judge of all the earth shall break the seals and pour out the vials and the ungodly sons of men shall see the star, Wormwood, and shall drink of the bitterness of the wrath of God—WOE—it means sorrow here! No rest! No satisfaction! Woe, woe, even at this day unto the man that trusts not in God! But what it means in the next world—to be driven from the face of Christ, to be followed with a “woe” which shall have eternal echoes—woe, woe, woe! I would gladly stop and cry with Mr. Whitfield, “The wrath to come! The wrath to come! “Escape from it while yet life lasts and Jesus pleads with you, for otherwise this shall fall like a thunderbolt from the hand of the angry Judge!”

“Woe to her. She obeyed not His voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to her God.” Then all this will turn to woe, the voice disregarded will ring again, “Son, remember! Son, remember! Woe, woe!” As for the correction which was disregarded, oh how light and gentle it will seem compared with the strokes that will then fall upon the rejecters of Christ! Every correction will then turn to woe! And the not trusting in the Savior, the unbelief—what woe that will bring! The not drawing near to God—what woe that will cost when we shall see ourselves afar off and between us and God a great gulf fixed so that none can come to us, no, not so much as to bring a drop of water to cool our tongue! And neither can any go from us, or escape from the place of woe.

II. To help any who would escape from this woe, I shall spend a minute in noticing THE FOUR HIDDEN CONSOLATIONS WHICH LIE IN THIS TEXT. I do not intend to enlarge upon them because I want the previous part of this discourse to abide in your minds—but there are four hidden consolations. The first is, if I have not obeyed His voice yet, it is plain He does speak, He speaks to *me*. My Soul, my Soul, God is not dumb. Can you be deaf? Still does He invite you, still does He call you, still does His good Spirit strive with you! This voice of mine, tonight, I hope will be God’s voice to some of you. Be encouraged! He has not given up on you, but still calls. When the sentence of death is pronounced there are no

warnings given and since you are having another call, I would encourage you to hope.

The next is, “She received not correction.” Then all my troubles and afflictions are meant to bring me to Christ. They are all sent in love to my soul and I ought to look at them as such. My Friend, where are you? I do not know where you are, or to whom I am speaking, but I do pray you see that God, who seems to have dealt very harshly with you, is only driving you to mercy! His voice has been harsh and His hand has been heavy, but in *love* He corrects you! Oh listen to Him! Come to Him! A judge does not correct a criminal doomed to die. God does not correct a soul, with a view to its reclamation, if He has given it up altogether!

Notice the next sentence. “She trusted not in the Lord.” Is it a crime, then, that I did not trust in the Lord? Then I may trust Him and I will, for that which is a sin *not* to do, I must have a right to do—and if it is laid to my charge, “She trusts not in the Lord,” oh, sweet mercy! Sweet mercy, I may trust! This is why the Scripture says, “He that believes not shall be damned,” as if to assure you that you certainly *may* believe, because you will be damned if you do not! Come, then, and let even the black side of the text wear a smile for you and lead you to trust your God since He blames you for not doing so!

Then there was the last crime. “She drew not near to God.” What, then, does God make it a fault that I do not draw near to Him? Oh, I wish the Spirit of God would put it into your heart to say, “That shall not be my fault any longer—

***‘I’ll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter pardon gives.
Perhaps He may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives.’***

I thought I might not come, but now I see I am condemned for not coming, then I will come! I will delay no longer, I will come to Jesus, determined that if I perish I will perish at His feet!”

Have hope, my Friend, for none did ever perish *there*! May God set His seal to this word of expostulation for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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

A SERMON FOR THE TIME PRESENT NO. 1990

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 30, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear not: and to Zion,
Let not your hands be slack. The Lord your God in the midst
of you is mighty. He will save, He will rejoice
over you with joy. He will rest in His love; He will joy over you with singing.
I will gather them that are sorrowful over the solemn assembly,
who are of you, to whom the reproach of it was a burden.”
Zephaniah 3:16-18.***

HOLY Scripture is wonderfully full and abiding in its inner sense. It is a springing well where you may draw and draw again, for as you draw, it springs up forever new and fresh! It is a well of water springing up everlastingly. The fulfillment of a Divine promise is not the exhaustion of it. When a man gives you a promise and he keeps it, there is an end of the promise—but it is not so with God. When He keeps His Word to the fullest, He has but begun—He is prepared to keep it, and keep it, and keep it forever and ever! What would you say of a man who had wheat upon his barn floor and threshed it until he had beaten out the last golden grain, but the next day he went and threshed again and brought back as much as the day before? And what if, on the day after, again taking his flail, he went to the same threshing and again brought back his measure as full as at the first, and so on for all the days of the year? Would it not seem to you as a fairy tale? It would certainly be a surprising miracle! But what should we say if, throughout a long life, this miracle could be prolonged?

Yet we have continued to thresh the promises of God ever since faith was given us—and we have carried away our full portion every day! What shall we say of the glorious fact that the saints in all generations, from the first day until now, have done the same? And of that equal Truth of God, that as long as there is a needy soul upon earth, there will be upon the threshing door of the promises the same abundance of the finest of the wheat as when the first man filled his measure and returned rejoicing? I will not dwell upon the specific application of the text before us. I do not doubt that it was specially fulfilled as it was intended and if there still remains some special piece of history to which this passage alludes, it will again be fulfilled in due time. But this I know, that those who have lived between whiles have found this promise true to them! Children of God have used these promises under all sorts of circumstances and have derived the utmost comfort from them!

And this morning I feel as if the text had been newly written for the present occasion, for it is in every syllable most suitable to the immediate

crisis. If the Lord had fixed His eyes upon the condition of His Church just now, and had written this passage only for this year of Grace, 1887, it could scarcely have been more adapted to the occasion! Our business shall be to show this, but I would aim at much more. Let our prayer be that we may enjoy this marvelous portion of the sacred Word of God and take intense delight in it. As God rests in His love, so may we rest in it this morning. And as He joys over us with singing, so may we break forth into joyous Psalms to the God of our salvation!

I am going to begin with the last verse of the text and work my way backwards. The first head is, *a trying day for God's people*. They are sorrowful because a cloud is upon their solemn assembly and the reproach thereof is a burden. Secondly, we will note *a glorious ground of consolation*. We read in the 17th verse, "The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty. He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy. He will rest in His love; He will joy over you with singing." And, thirdly, here is *a brave conduct suggested thereby*—"In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear you not: and to Zion, Let not your hands be slack."

I. Beginning at the 18th verse, we notice A TRYING DAY FOR GOD'S PEOPLE. *The solemn assembly had fallen under reproach*. The solemn assemblies of Israel were her glory—her great days of festival and sacrifice were the gladness of the land. To the faithful, their holy days were their holidays. But a reproach had fallen upon the solemn assembly and I believe it is so now at this present moment. It is a sad affliction when in our solemn assemblies *the brilliance of the Gospel Light is dimmed by error*. The clearness of the testimony is spoiled when doubtful voices are scattered among the people and those who ought to preach the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth, are preaching doctrines which are the imaginations of men and the inventions of the age! Instead of the Revelation of God, we have philosophy, falsely so-called! Instead of Divine Infallibility, we have surmises and larger hopes. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the same yesterday, today and forever is taught as the production of progress, a *growth*, a thing to be amended and corrected year by year. It is an ill day, both for the Church and the world, when the trumpet does not give a certain sound—for who shall prepare himself for the battle?

If added to this, we should see *creeping over the solemn assembly of the Church a lifelessness, an indifference and a lack of spiritual power*—it is painful to a high degree. When the vitality of religion is despised and gatherings for prayer are neglected, what are we coming to? The present period of Church history is well portrayed by the Church of Laodicea, which was neither cold nor hot and, therefore, to be spewed out of Christ's mouth. That Church gloried that she was rich and increased in goods, and had need of nothing, while all the while her Lord was outside, knocking at the door, a door closed against Him! That passage is constantly applied to the unconverted, with whom it has nothing to do—it has to do with a lukewarm *Church*, with a Church that thought itself to be in an eminently prosperous condition—while her living Lord, in the doctrine of His atoning Sacrifice, was denied an entrance! Oh, if He had found admis-

sion—and He was eager to find it—she would soon have flung away her imaginary wealth and He would have given her gold tried in the furnace and white raiment with which she might be clothed! Alas, she is content without her Lord, for she has education, oratory, science and a thousand other baubles! Zion's solemn assembly is under a cloud, indeed, when the teaching of Jesus and His Apostles is of small account with her.

If in addition to this, *worldly conformity spreads in the Church* so that the vain amusements of the world are shared in by the saints! Then is there reason enough for lamentation, even as Jeremiah cried—"How is the gold become dim!" Her Nazarites, who were purer than snow and whiter than milk, have become blacker than coal. "All our enemies have opened their mouths against us." If there is no longer a clear distinction between the Church and the world, but professed followers of Jesus have joined hands with unbelievers, then may we mourn, indeed! Woe worth the day! An ill time has happened to the Church and also to the world. We may expect great judgments, for the Lord will surely be avenged on such a people as this! Know you not of old that when the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair, and they were joined unto them, then the flood came and swept them all away? I need not pursue this subject further, lest our *burdens* take from us the time which is demanded for *consolation*.

It appears from the text that *there were some to whom the reproach was a burden*. They could not make sport of sin. True, there were many who said that the evil did not exist at all! And others who declared that it was not present in any great degree. Yes, and more hardened spirits declared that what was considered to be a reproach was really a thing to be boasted of, the very glory of the century! Thus they huffed the matter and made the mourning of the conscientious to be a theme for jest. But there was a remnant to whom the reproach of it was a burden—these could not bear to see such a calamity. To these the Lord God will have respect, as He said by the Prophet—"Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof."

The majority drank wine in bowls and anointed themselves with their chief ointments, but they were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph (Amos 6:6). But some were pressed in spirit and bore the Cross, counting the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. God's people cannot bear that Christ's atoning Sacrifice should be dishonored! They cannot endure that this Truth of God should be trod under as mire in the streets. To true Believers, prosperity means the Holy Spirit blessing the Word to the conversion of sinners and the building up of saints. And if they do not see this, they hang their harps on the willows. True lovers of Jesus fast when the Bridegroom is not with His Church—their glory is in His Glory and in nothing else! The wife of Phinehas, the son of Eli, cried out in her aging agony, "The glory has departed," and the reason that she gave was once because of the death of her husband and his father, but, twice, because, "the Ark of God is taken." For this she named her new-

born child, Ichabod—"The glory is departed from Israel, for the Ark of God is taken." The most bitter pain of this godly woman was for the *Church* and for the honor of our God! So it is with God's true people—they lay it much to heart that the Truth of God is rejected.

This burdened spirit is a token of true love to God—those who love the Lord Jesus are wounded in His wounding and vexed with the vexing of His Spirit. When Christ is dishonored, His disciples are dishonored. Those who have a tender heart towards the Church can say with Paul, "Who is offended and I burn not?" The sins of the Church of God are the sorrows of all living members of it. This also marks a healthy sensibility, a vital spirituality. Those who are unspiritual care *nothing* for Truth or Grace—they look to finances, numbers and respectability! Utterly carnal men care for nothing spiritual and, so long as the political aims of Dissenters are progressing and there is an advance in social position, it is enough for them. But men whose spirits are of God would sooner see the faithful *persecuted* than see them desert the Truth! They would sooner see Churches in the depths of poverty, full of holy zeal, than rich churches dead in worldliness! Spiritual men care for the Church even when she is in an evil case and cast down by her adversaries—"Your servants take pleasure in her stones and favor the dust thereof." The House of the Lord is, to many of us, our own house. His family is our family! Unless the Lord Jesus is extolled and His Gospel conquers, we feel that our own personal interests are blighted and we, ourselves, are in disgrace. It is no small thing to us—it in our life!

Thus have I dwelt upon the fact that it is an ill day for God's people when the solemn assembly is defiled—the reproach thereof is a burden to those who are truly citizens of the New Jerusalem—and because of this, *they are seen to be sorrowful*. The Lord here says, "I will gather them that are sorrowful over the solemn assembly." They may well be sorrowful when such a burden is laid on their hearts. Moreover, they see in a hundred ways the ill effect of the evil which they deplore. Many are lame and halting—this is hinted at in the promise of the 19th verse—"I will save the lame." Pilgrims on the road to Zion were made to limp on the road because the Prophets were "light and treacherous persons." When the pure Gospel is not preached, God's people are robbed of the strength which they need in their life journey. If you take away the bread, the children hunger. If you give the flock poisonous pastures, or fields which are barren as the desert, they pine and they become lame in their daily following of the Shepherd. The doctrinal soon affects the practical.

I know many of the people of God living in different parts of this country to whom the Sabbath is very little of a day of rest, for they hear no Truths of God in which rest is to be found—they are worried and wearied with novelties which neither glorify God nor benefit the souls of men! In many a place, the sheep look up and are not fed. This causes much disquietude and breeds doubts and questions—and thus strength is turned to weakness and the work of faith, the labor of love and the patience of hope are all kept in a lame state. This is a grievous evil and it is all around us. Then, alas, many are "driven out," of whom the 19th verse

says, "I will gather those who are driven out." By false doctrine many are made to wander from the fold. Hopeful ones are made to stray from the path of life and sinners are left in their natural distance from God. The Truth of God which would convince men of sin is not preached, while other Truths which would lead seekers into peace are beclouded and souls are left in needless sorrow. When the Doctrines of Grace and the glorious atoning Sacrifice are not set clearly before men's minds, so that they may feel their power, all sorts of evils follow! It is terrible to me that this dreadful blight should come upon our Churches, for the hesitating are driven to destruction, the weak are staggered and even the strong are perplexed! The false teachers of these days would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect! This makes our hearts very sorrowful. How can we help it?

Yet, Beloved, all the time that the people of God are in this evil case, *they are not without hope*, for close upon all this comes the promise of the Lord to restore His wandering ones. We have the sense twice over—"I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame." "I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, says the Lord." The adversaries cannot silence the eternal testimony! They hung our Lord, Himself, on a tree. They took down His body and buried it in a tomb in the rock. And they set their seal upon the stone which they rolled at the mouth of the sepulcher. Surely, now, there was an end of the Christ and His cause! Boast not, you priests and Pharisees! Vain the watch, the stone, the seal! When the appointed time had come, the living Christ came forth! He could not be held by the cords of Death. How idle their dreams! "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord does have them in derision." Beloved, the reproach will yet be rolled away from the solemn assembly—the Truth of God will yet again be proclaimed as with trumpet tongue! The Spirit of God will revive His Church and converts as many as the sheaves of the harvest shall yet be gathered in! How will the faithful rejoice! Those who were burdened and sorrowful shall then put on their garments of joy and beauty! Then shall the ransomed of the Lord return with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads! The conflict is not doubtful. The end of the battle is sure and certain. I think I even now hear the shout, "The Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"

II. Secondly, let us think of something which shines like a star amid the darkness. The second verse of the text presents A GLORIOUS GROUND OF CONSOLATION. Here is a rich text, indeed! This passage is like a great sea, while I am as a little child making pools in the sand which skirts its boundless flood. A series of discourses might well be founded on this one verse—I mean the seventeenth.

Our great consolation in the worst times lies in our God. The very name of our Covenant God—"The Lord Your God"—is full of good cheer! That word, "The Lord," is really JEHOVAH, the Self-Existent One, the Unchangeable One, the Ever-Living God who cannot change or be moved from His everlasting purpose! Children of God, whatever you have not got, you have a God in whom you may greatly glory! Having God, you have

more than all things, for all things come of Him. And if all things were blotted out, He could restore all things simply by His will. He speaks and it is done! He commands and it stands fast! Blessed is the man that has the God of Jacob for his trust and whose hope is Jehovah! In the Lord Jehovah we have righteousness and strength. Let us trust in Him forever! Let the times roll on—they cannot affect our God. Let troubles rush upon us like a tempest, but they shall not come near unto us now that He is our defense. Jehovah, the God of His Church, is also the God of each individual member of it—and each one may, therefore, rejoice in Him. Jehovah is as much your God, my Brothers and Sisters, as if no other person in the universe could use that Covenant expression!

O Believer, the Lord God is altogether and wholly *your* God! All His wisdom, all His foresight, all His power, all His immutability—all Himself is yours! As for the Church of God, when she is in her lowest estate, she is still established and endowed in the best possible sense—established by the Divine decree and endowed by the possession of God All-Sufficient! The gates of Hell shall not prevail against her. Let us exult in our possession! Poor as we are, we are infinitely rich in having God! Weak as we are, there is no limit to our strength, since the Almighty Jehovah is ours! “If God is for us, who can be against us?” If God is ours, what more can we need? Lift up your heart, you sorrowful one, and be of good cheer! If God is your God, you have all you can desire. Wrapped up within His glorious name we find all things for time and eternity, for earth and Heaven. Therefore in the name of Jehovah we will set up our banners and march onward to the battle! He is our God by His own purpose, Covenant and oath—and this day He is our God by our own choice of Him, by our union with Christ Jesus, by our experience of His goodness and by that spirit of adoption whereby we cry, “Abba, Father.”

To strengthen this consolation, we notice, next, that *this God is in the midst of us*. He is not a long way off, to be sought with difficulty, if haply we may find Him. The Lord is a God near at hand and ready to deliver His people. Is it not delightful to think that we cry not to God across the ocean, for He is *here*? We look not up to Him from afar, as though He dwelt beyond the stars, neither do we think of Him as hidden in the fathomless abyss—but the Lord is very near. Our God is “Jehovah in the midst of you.” Since that bright night in which a Babe was born at Bethlehem and unto us a Son was given, we know God as, “Emmanuel, God With Us.” God is in our Nature and, therefore, very near to us. “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” Though His bodily Presence is gone, yet we have His spiritual Presence with us always, for He says, “Lo, I am with you always.” He walks among the golden candlesticks. We also have the immediate Presence of God the Holy Spirit. He is in the midst of the Church to enlighten, convince, quicken, endow, comfort and clothe with spiritual power. The Lord still works in the minds of men for the accomplishment of His purposes of Grace.

Let us think of this when we are going forth to Christian service—“The Lord of Hosts is with us.” When you call your class together in the Sunday school, say to your Lord, “If Your Presence go not with me, carry me not

up from here.” Ah, Friends, if we have God with us, we can bear to be deserted by men! What a Word of God that is, “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them”! Shall not the army shout when the King, Himself, is in their ranks! Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered! When He is with us they that hate Him must flee before Him! Be it our concern so to live that we may never grieve away the Spirit of God. Beloved, there is such abundant consolation in the fact of the Presence of God with us, that if we could only feel the power of it at this moment, we should enter into rest and our Heaven would begin below!

Let us go a step further and note that our consolation is largely to be found in the fact that *this God in the midst of us is full of power to save*. “The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; He will save.” That is to say, “Jehovah, your God, is mighty to save.” His arm is not shortened! He is still “a just God and a Savior.” Nor is He merely able to save, but He will *display* that ability—“He *will* save.” Come, my Brother, we see around us this and that to discourage us—let us, like David, encourage ourselves in the Lord our God! We may very well forget all difficulties, since the God who is in the midst of us is mighty to save! Let us pray, then, that He will save—that He will save His own Church from lukewarmness and from deadly error—that He will save her from her worldliness and formalism. He will save her from unconverted ministers and ungodly members! Let us lift up our eyes and behold the power which is ready to save and let us go on to pray that the Lord may save the unconverted by thousands and millions! Oh, that we might see a great revival of religion! This is what we need before all things. This would smite the enemy on the cheekbone and break the teeth of the adversary! If tens of thousands of souls were immediately saved by the Sovereign Grace of God, what a rebuke it would be to those who deny the faith! Oh, for times such as our fathers saw when first Whitefield and his helpers began to preach the life-giving Word of God!

When one sweet voice was heard clear and loud, all the birds of paradise began to sing in concert with him, and the morning of a glorious day was heralded. Oh, if that were to happen again, I should feel like Simeon when he embraced the heavenly Babe! Then would the virgin daughter of Zion shake her head at the foe and laugh him to scorn. It may happen—yes, if we are *importunate in prayer* it *must* happen—“God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.” Let us not seek power of rhetoric, much less of wealth, but let us look for the power which saves! This is the one thing I crave! Oh, that God would save souls! I say to myself, after being badgered and worried through the week by the men of modern thought—“I will go my way and preach Christ’s Gospel and win souls.” One lifting up of Jesus Christ Crucified is more to me than all the quibbling of the men who are wise above what is written! *Converts* are our unanswerable arguments! “Happy is the man,” says the Psalm, “that has his quiver full of them: they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.” Blessed is the man who has many spiritual children born to God under his ministry, for his converts are his defense. Beholding the man who was healed standing with Peter and John, they could say nothing against

them. If souls are saved by the Gospel, the Gospel is proved in the surest manner. Let us care more about *conversions* than about organizations! If souls are brought into union with Christ, we may let other unions go!

We go yet further and we come to great deeps—behold *God's joy in His people*. “He will rejoice over you with joy.” Think of this! Jehovah, the living God, is described as brooding over His Church with pleasure! He looks upon souls redeemed by the blood of His dear Son quickened by His Holy Spirit and His heart is glad! Even the infinite heart of God is filled with an extraordinary joy at the sight of His chosen. His delight is in His Church, His Hephzibah. I can understand a minister rejoicing over a soul that he has brought to Christ. I can also understand Believers rejoicing to see others saved from sin and Hell. But what shall I say of the infinitely happy and eternally-blessed *God* finding, as it were, a new joy in souls redeemed? This is another of those great wonders which cluster around the work of Divine Grace! “He will rejoice over you with joy.” Oh, you are trembling for the Ark of the Lord—the *Lord* is not trembling, but rejoicing! Faulty as the Church is, the Lord rejoices in her! While we mourn, as well we may, yet we do not sorrow as those that are without hope, for *God* does not sorrow—His heart is glad and He is said to rejoice with joy—a highly emphatic expression!

The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, imperfect though they are. He sees them as they are to be and so He rejoices over them, even when they cannot rejoice in themselves. When your face is blurred with tears, your eyes red with weeping and your heart is heavy with sorrow for sin, the great Father is rejoicing over you! The prodigal son wept in his father's bosom, but the father rejoiced over his son. We are questioning, doubting, sorrowing, trembling—and all the while, He who sees the end from the beginning knows what will come out of the present disquietude and, therefore, rejoices! Let us rise in faith to share the joy of God! Let no man's heart fail him because of the taunts of the enemy. Rather let the chosen of God rouse themselves to courage and participate in that joy of God which never ceases, even though the solemn assembly has become a reproach! Shall we not rejoice in *Him* when He, in His boundless condescension, deigns to rejoice in *us*? Whoever despairs for the cause, He does not—therefore let us be of good courage.

It is added, “*He will rest in His love.*” I do not know any Scripture which is more full of wonderful meaning than this! “He shall rest in His love,” as if our God had, in His people, found satisfaction! He comes to an anchorage—He has reached His desire. As when a Jacob, full of love to Rachel, has, at last, ended the years of his service and is married to his well-beloved and his heart is at rest. So is it spoken in parable of the Lord, our God—Jesus sees of the travail of His soul when His people are won to Him! He has been baptized with His Baptism for His Church and He is no longer straitened, for His desire is fulfilled. The Lord is content with His eternal choice, content with His loving purposes, satisfied with the love which went forth from everlasting. He is well pleased in Jesus—well pleased with all the glorious purposes which are connected with His dear Son and with those who are in Him. He has a calm content in the people

of His choice, as He sees them in Christ. This is also a good ground for our having a deep satisfaction of heart. We are not what we would be, but then, we are not what we *shall* be. We advance slowly, but then, we advance *surely*. The end is secured by Omnipotent Grace. It is right that we should be discontented with ourselves, yet this holy restlessness should not rob us of our perfect peace in Christ Jesus. If the Lord has rest in us, shall we not have rest in Him? If He rests in His love, cannot we rest in it? My heart is comforted as I plainly see in these words, unchanging love, abiding love, eternal love—"He will rest in His love." Jehovah changes not! Being married to His people, "He hates putting away." Immutability is written on His heart. The turtledove, when he has once chosen his mate, remains faithful throughout life and if the beloved dies, he will, in many cases, pine away with grief for her, for his life is wrapped up in hers. Even so our Lord has made His choice of His beloved and He will never change it—He died for His Church and so long as He lives, He will remember His own love and what it cost Him—"Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" "He will rest in His love."

The love of God to us is undisturbed—"The peace of God, which passes all understanding"—dwells with His love. He is not disquieted about it, but peacefully loves and is never moved. The calm of God is wonderful to contemplate—His Infallible knowledge and Infinite power put Him beyond fear or question. He sees no cause of alarm as to His redeemed, nor as to the cause of Truth and the reign of righteousness! As to His true Church, He knows that she is right, or that He will make her right. She is being transformed into the image of Jesus and He rests in the full assurance that the image will, before long, be complete. He can carry out His own purposes in His own way and time. He can see the harvest as well as the sowing, therefore He does "rest in His love." You have seen a mother wash her child and as she washes its face the child, perhaps, is crying, for it does not, for the present, enjoy the cleansing operation. Does the mother share the child's grief? Does she also cry? Oh, no! She rejoices over her baby, and rests in her love, knowing that the light affliction of the little one will work its real good. Often our griefs are no deeper than the cry of a child because of the soap in its eyes. While the Church is being washed with tribulations and persecutions, God is resting in His love! You and I are wearying, but God is resting.

"He shall rest in His love." The Hebrew of this line is, "He shall be silent in His love." His happiness in His love is so great that He does not express it, but keeps a happy silence. His is a joy too deep for words! No language can express the joy of God in His love and, therefore, He uses no words. Silence in this case is infinitely expressive. One of the old commentators says, "He is deaf and dumb in His love," as if He heard no voice of accusation against His chosen and would not speak a word of upbraiding to her. Remember the silence of Jesus and expound this text thereby.

Sometimes, also, the Lord does not speak to His people—we cannot get a cheering word from Him. And then we sigh for a promise and long for a visit of His love. But if He is thus silent, let us know that He is only silent

in His love! It is not the silence of wrath, but of love! His love is not changed, even though He does not comfort us—

***“His thoughts are high, His love is wise,
His wounds a cure intend.
And though He does not always smile,
He loves unto the end.”***

When He does not answer our prayers with His hands, He yet hears them with His heart. Denials are only another form of the same love which grants our petitions. He loves us and sometimes shows that love better by not giving us what we ask than He could do if He spoke the sweetest promise which the ears have ever heard. I prize this sentence—“He shall rest in His love.” My God, You are perfectly content with Your Church, after all, because You know what she is to be. You see how fair she will be when she comes forth from the washing, having put on her beautiful garments. Lo, the sun goes down and we mortals dread the endless darkness, but You, great God, see the morning and You know that in the hours of darkness dew will fall which shall refresh Your garden. Ours is the measure of an hour and yours the judgment of eternity! Therefore we will, by Your Grace, correct our short-sighted judgment by Your Infallible knowledge and rest with You.

The last Word is, however, the most wonderful of all—“*He will joy over you with singing.*” Think of the great Jehovah *singing!* Can you imagine it? Is it possible to conceive of the Deity breaking into a song? Father, Son and Holy Spirit together singing over the redeemed? God is so happy in the love which He bears to His people that He breaks the eternal silence—and sun and moon and stars—with astonishment hear God chanting a hymn of joy! Among Orientals a certain song is sung by the Bridegroom when he receives his bride—it is intended to declare his joy in her and in the fact that his marriage has come. Here, by the pen of Inspiration, the God of Love is pictured as married to His Church and so rejoicing in her that He rejoices over her with singing! If God sings, shall we not sing? He did not sing when He made the world. No, He looked upon it and simply said that it was good. The angels sang, the sons of God shouted for joy—creation was very wonderful to them—but it was not much to God who could have made thousands of worlds by His mere will. Creation could not make Him sing and I do not even know that Providence ever brought a note of joy from Him, for He could arrange a thousand kingdoms of Providence with ease!

But when it came to *redemption* that cost Him dearly. Here He spent eternal thought and drew up a Covenant with Infinite wisdom. Here He gave His only-begotten Son and put Him to grief to ransom His beloved ones. When all was done and the Lord saw what became of it in the salvation of His redeemed, then He rejoiced after a Divine manner! What must the joy be which recompenses Gethsemane and Calvary! Here we are among the Atlantic waves. The Lord God receives an accession to the Infinity of His joy in the thought of His redeemed people. “He shall rejoice over you with singing.” I tremble while I speak of such themes, lest I should say a word that should dishonor the matchless mystery, but still, we are glad to note what is written and we are bound to take comfort from

it. Let us have sympathy with the joy of the Lord, for this will be our strength.

III. I close with a brief word upon THE BRAVE CONDUCT SUGGESTED THEREBY. Let us not sorrow under the burdens which we bear, but rejoice in God, the great Burden-Bearer upon whom, this day, we roll our load. Here it is—"In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear you not; and to Zion, Let not your hands be slack."

There are three things for God's people to do. The first is, to *be happy*. Read verse fourteen—"Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem." Any man can sing when his cup is full of delights. The Believer, alone, has songs when waters of a bitter cup are wrung out to him! Any sparrow can chirp in the daylight—it is only the nightingale that can sing in the dark. Children of God, whenever the enemies seem to prevail over you, whenever the serried ranks of the foe appear sure of victory, then begin to sing! Your victory will come with your song!

It is a very puzzling thing to the devil to hear saints sing when he sets his foot on them. He cannot make it out—the more he oppresses them, the more they rejoice! Let us resolve to be all the merrier when the enemy dreams that we are utterly routed. The more opposition, the more we will rejoice in the Lord! The more discouragement, the more confidence! Splendid was the courage of Alexander when they told him that there were hundreds of thousands of Persians. "Yet," he said, "one butcher fears not myriads of sheep." "Ah!" said another, "when the Persians draw their bows, their arrows are so numerous that they darken the sun." "It will be fine to fight in the shade," cried the hero! O Friends, we know whom we have believed and we are sure of triumph! Let us not think, for a single second, if the odds against us are 10,000 to one, that this is a hardship! Rather let us wish that they were a million to one, that the Glory of the Lord might be all the greater in the conquest which is sure!

When Athanasius was told that everybody was denying the Deity of Christ, he then said, "I Athanasius, against the world"—*Athanasius contra mundum* became a proverbial expression! Brothers, it is a splendid thing to be quite alone in the warfare of the Lord. Suppose we had half-a-dozen with us. Six men are not much increase to strength and, possibly, they may be a cause of weakness, by needing to be looked after. If you are quite alone, so much the better—there is the more room for God! When desertions have cleaned the place out and left you no friends, now every corner can be filled with Deity. As long as there is so much that is visible to rely upon and so much to hope in, there is so much the less room for simple trust in God—but now our song is of the Lord, alone—"For great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of you."

The next duty is *fearlessness*—"Fear you not." What? Not even a little? No, "Fear you not." But surely I may show some measure of trembling? No, "Fear you not." Tie that knot tight about the throat of unbelief! "Fear you not"—neither this day, nor any day of your life. When fear comes in, drive it away, give it no space! If God rests in His love and if God sings, what can you have to do with fear? Have you never known passengers on

board ship, when the weather was rough, comforted by the calm behavior of the captain? One simple-minded soul said to his friend, "I am sure there is no cause for fear, for I heard the captain whistling." Surely, if the captain is at ease, and with him is all the responsibility, the passenger may be still more at peace! If the Lord Jesus at the helm is singing, let us not be fearing! Let us have done with every timorous accent. O rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. "Your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; He will come and save you."

Lastly, let us *be zealous*—"Let not your hands be slack." Now is the time when every Christian should do more for God than ever. Let us plan great things *for* God and let us expect great things *from* God. "Let not your hands be slack." Now is the hour for redoubled prayers and labors! Since the adversaries are busy, let us also be busy. If they think they shall make a full end of us, let us resolve to make a full end of their lies and delusions. I think every Christian should answer the challenge of the adversaries of Christ by working double tides, by giving more of his substance to the cause of God, by living more for the glory of God, by being more exact in his obedience, more earnest in his efforts and more importunate in his prayers. "Let not your hands be slack" in any one part of holy service! Fear is a dreadful breeder of idleness, but courage teaches us indomitable perseverance. Let us go on in God's name. I would stir up the members of this Church and all my Brothers to intense zeal for God and the souls of men. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Would God that all were on Christ's side out of this great assembly! Oh, that you would come to Jesus and trust Him and then live for Him in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation! The Lord be with us. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Zephaniah 3.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—46, 731, 18.**

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THE SAVIOR RESTING IN HIS LOVE NO. 2720

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 31, 1901.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON.
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1859.**

*“He will rest in His love.”
Zephaniah 3:17.*

ONE of our sweetest hymns commences with this verse —

*“How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He has said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?”*

Well might the poet have put that question if he had risen up from reading this third chapter of the prophecy of Zephaniah! O people of God, open your ears and your hearts while Jehovah thus speaks to you by the mouth of His ancient Prophet, “Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy: the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of you: you shall not see evil anymore. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear you not: and to Zion, Let not your hands be slack. The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing.” The words are very simple, but the promises they convey are so weighty that the verses roll along like the triumphant periods of a jubilant poem! The Truth of God, even when told in the simplest words, is very much akin to the loftiest poetry and I might, without the slightest hesitation, declare that there never was any poem composed by human intellect which could match for a moment, in the sweetness of its notes, the succession of precious promises which God here proclaims in the ears of His chosen ones!

We cannot, on the present occasion, enter into the wondrous depths of the promises here revealed. We would need, indeed, a long period of time before we would be able to explain them and, possibly, the whole of life will scarcely be sufficient for us to fully realize these great Truths of God in our own experience. We will, therefore, at once turn to the few words I have chosen as my text, “He will rest in His love,” and we shall consider these words as referring to the Lord Jesus Christ and as relating to His Divine and matchless love which He has manifested toward His people in the wondrous works of Grace which He has accomplished for them and in them.

“He will rest in His love.” This short sentence is capable of several interpretations and each view we take of it has in it something extremely delightful.

I. Here is, first of all, THE DOCTRINE THAT CHRIST WILL ALWAYS STAY FAITHFUL TO THOSE UPON WHOM HE HAS SET HIS HEART’S AFFECTION.

The love of human beings is a fitful and flickering flame. It may be set, for a season, with apparent constancy upon a certain object, but you can never tell how long it will remain steadfast. However firm, however true and however fervent it may seem to be—and even may *really* be—yet trust it not so implicitly as to come under that ancient sentence, “Cursed is the man who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord.” Trust not too much to any friend whom you may have! Put not all your confidence in any man, for the best of men are but men at the best, and the firmest of men are subject to the infirmities and the frailties of their race!

But God’s love is no flickering flame! It does not flare up for a little while, like the crackling of thorns under a pot, and then die out in darkness. It is not to be set forth by the image of a fool’s mirth which lasts but for a little season. It begins, it waxes vehement, it diminishes not, but it grows from strength to strength till what seemed at first to be but a single spark, becomes a mighty flame—and what was a flame becomes like the beacon lights of war, and what was but as a beacon becomes as the sun itself, in the fierceness of its heat and in the majesty of its goings!

There are some who teach that Christ’s love may be set upon a man and yet that it may afterwards be removed from him. Where, then, remains the comfort of God’s people if *their* teaching is true? But, thank God, it is *not* true, for the promise of the text is that Jesus “will rest in His love.” If their doctrine is according to the Scriptures, where is the value of Christ’s affection at all? In what respects can He be said to stick closer than a brother? How can it be true that many waters cannot quench His love, neither can the floods drown it? If these men are right, must not the Apostle Paul have been wrong when he declared that he was persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in the whole of creation should ever be able to separate the saints from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus their Lord? Shall we imagine that the Apostle was mistaken and suppose that this erroneous teaching is the Truth of God? Shall we turn away from the positive testimony of Holy Scripture and believe the lies of men in its place, especially when that Scripture is itself so full of consolation to God’s people that if it can ever be proved to be untrue, they may put their hands upon their loins in agony of woe, and go to their graves full of misery and despair?

But, Beloved, you know right well that Jesus Christ’s love, when once it has engraved your name upon His hand and His heart, will never allow that name to be erased! You believe and you believe aright, that he who has a portion in the heart of God has an eternal portion! He who can claim for himself a share of the Father’s love, of the Son’s redemption,

and of the Spirit's care, need never be afraid that all the thievish hosts of Hell shall rob him of his Divine inheritance. For look here, Brothers and Sisters, what is there to separate you and me from Jesus Christ's love, which has not been already tried?

Can sin ever make Jesus cease to love me? If so, He would have ceased to love me long ago. If there is any iniquity that I can commit that would divide me from Christ's love, I think that I would have been separated from Him long before this, for, in looking back upon my own life, I am compelled, with shame and confusion of face, to fall upon my knees and confess that He has had a thousand reasons for thrusting me out of doors if He had chosen to do so, and He might have framed millions of excuses if He had resolved to blot my name out of the Book of Life. He might have said, "You are unworthy of Me and, therefore, I will be unmindful of you."

Further, if Christ had intended to cast us away because of our sins, why did He ever take us on? Did He not know, beforehand, that we would be rebellious, and did not His Omniscient eyes see all our sins and detect all our follies? Are we ungrateful? He knew that we would be. Are our sins extremely heinous? He knew how heinous they would be. He could foresee all—every spot that was to be upon us, was upon us before His Omniscient eyes when He chose us. Every fault that we would commit was already committed in His estimation. He foreknew and foresaw all, yet He chose us just as we were. If He had intended to abandon us and cast us away, would He ever have accepted us at all? If Jesus meant to divorce His bride, foreknowing all her faults, would He ever have married her? If He determined to cast away His adopted child, since He knew that child's unfaithfulness, would He ever have adopted him? Oh, think not, Beloved, that Christ would have done all that He has done for nothing, that He would have come from Heaven to earth and have even gone from the Cross to the grave, and allowed His spirit to descend into the shades of Hades on a bootless errand! Would He not have started back and said, "I know My bride will prove to be unworthy, therefore I will not marry her"? But since He *has* married her and has put the red ring of His own Atonement on her finger, and has been faithful to her, what shall ever cause Him to divorce her? What can ever induce Him to cast from His bosom her whom He died to save? It must be true that, "He will rest in His love," for He has hitherto rested in it, though He has had much to mourn over in His chosen ones.

Our sin, then, has not divided and, we believe, never shall divide us from the Savior's love. What remains? *Will sorrow ever separate us from our Savior?* Can tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword separate us from the love of Christ? No, for all these things do but make the Savior manifest His love to us the more. If Christ loves His people well in prosperity, He never loves them any less in their adversities. Do you believe that Christ loves His children when they are arrayed in purple and that He will forsake them when they wander about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented? If so, you know not the heart of Jesus. He loves His people well enough every-day—but if He sees them stretched upon the rack and about to die for His sake, if it is possible, the infinity of His love must then surpass itself!

Well said the Apostle, when he had mentioned all these sufferings and pains, “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”

Sin and sorrow, therefore, are perfectly incapable of tearing us from the heart of Christ, for He must, “He will rest in His love.” And this Truth of God will seem all the more plain and clear if we just pause a moment and think of *our relationship to God the Father and to God the Son*. Is not every Christian, God’s child? And did you ever know a true father who hated his own child? You may have known such a father, but it was not fatherly for him to hate his own son. Have you known a father who has cursed his son and driven him from his home—and declared that he was not his child? You may have known some men of that kind, or you may have heard of such unnatural creatures, but, mark you, the father’s curse could not make his child not his child—he was still his father’s son, even when he was cursed by him. Not even the foulest words that ever came from the most embittered heart could ever take away that child’s right to call that man his father—a child is a child forever if he is once a child—and a father is a father forever if he is once a father.

Now, Beloved, in the usual course of nature, we find that men will do anything for their children that they possibly can. Here is a poor creature, born into the world nearly an idiot—it has not its right senses—it is nearly blind and deaf, and its parents know that even if they can bring it up, it will always be a trouble to them. Yet you see with what studious care the father and mother endeavor to save the poor child’s life. While others say, “If it were to die, it would be a happy release,” both father and mother feel that they would be losers by its death. “Ah,” said one good old divine, “if a father could have a child that had lost eyes and ears, and feet and hands and though he could not breathe in a natural fashion, though he could not feed without some extraordinary means for the digestion of his food—even then his father would do his best to keep him alive—and so surely shall it be with that great Father who, when He speaks of Himself, and of us, always puts His Fatherhood far higher than ours, as Christ did when He said, ‘If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him?’ And I may truly say if an earthly father does not wish to lose his child—if he would endeavor to save his child’s life though it was loaded with ten thousand diseases—how much more shall our Father who is in Heaven see to it that none of His little ones shall perish, but that every one of them shall be preserved?” Do you not see that because we are God’s sons, we are, therefore, Jesus Christ’s brothers and, “He *will* rest in His love”?

But there is yet another thought, for we also have a relationship to Christ and, therefore, “He will rest in His love.” We have never yet heard of a man who hated his own flesh. Strangely wicked as it is, we have heard of men who have hated their flesh in the mystic sense of the marriage tie and who have driven their wives from them with all manner of brutality and cruelty. She whom the husband promised to cherish and to nourish, he has driven away, yet he has never thus treated his own flesh. The man may have become cruel and unnatural towards her who is his own flesh by marriage, but not towards his own literal flesh. Now, Jesus

Christ has taken His people into such a connection with Himself that they are nearer to Him even than the wife is to the husband—they are as near to Him as our own flesh and blood are to our own head. What will not a man do to save his hand, or the least member of his body? Would he ever cease to care for even the feeblest portion of his frame? No, men are generally careful enough of their own flesh and blood—much more, therefore, will our Lord Jesus Christ protect the members of His mystical body, for we are His fullness, the fullness of Him that fills all in all. And will Christ lose His own fullness? Shall His body be dismembered? Shall the head become a bleeding head, and the trunk become a corpse? Shall any one member be left to die, to burn, to be destroyed? Oh, no! As surely as we are brought into this relationship with Christ, so surely are we saved beyond any danger! This is one meaning of the text and most consolatory to the tried, tempest-tossed child of God.

II. I think, however, that there is another very sweet meaning to it—that is, CHRIST HAS LABORED IN HIS LOVE AND HE NOW RESTS IN IT.

Let me draw a picture for you. Here is a man who loves his hearth, his home, his country, and his Queen. The sound of battle is heard in the land, so he girds his sword upon his thigh and marches forth to defend all that is dear to him. He fights, he struggles—his garments are stained with blood—and he is wounded. It is love—love of his own safety, of his family and of his country that has made him fight so bravely. And now that the deed is done, he comes back to his home. The foe has been swept from the white cliffs of Albion and the land of liberty is still free—Britons are not slaves. The man retires to his house and you see how quietly he sleeps, how joyously he sits down under his own vine and fig tree, none daring to make him afraid. With what joy does he now look upon the faces of those whom he has defended and upon the home for which he has fought! What satisfaction does it give him to know that the honor of his country is still unstained and his land is still the home of the free! Now he rests in his love—that which made him fight, now gives him joy—that which impelled him in the day of battle to do great deeds of heroism is its own sweet reward! Now he rests because the battle is fought, the victory is won and he, therefore, rejoices in the very love which once caused him to labor.

Now see the Lord Jesus Christ laboring in His love. Love fetched Him from His Throne in Heaven. Love disrobed Him of His glories. Love laid Him in Bethlehem's manger. Love led Him through this weary world for 33 years. Love took Him to Gethsemane. Love oppressed Him till He sweat great drops of blood. Love made Him the great Standard-Bearer in the fight. Love made Him stand erect, the focus of the war, when the storm gathered round His brow and every arrow of the foeman found a target in His heart. Love made Him—

***“Calm ‘mid the bewildering cry,
Confident of victory.”***

Love made Him bow His head and give up the ghost, that He might redeem His people from their sins. Now He is more than conqueror—He rises to Heaven and He rests in His love! Oh, what a wondrous rest that is! If rest is sweet to the laboring man, how much sweeter to the bleeding

Man, the dying Man, the crucified Man, the risen Man? If rest is sweet after toil, how sweet must be the rest of Jesus after all the toils of life and death, the Cross and the grave! If victory makes the soldier's return joyous, how joyous must have been the return of that conquering Hero who has led captivity captive, and received gifts for men! Truly does our Lord Jesus "rest in His love."

Do you not see that the very thing that drove Him to labor now makes a pillow for His head? That which made Him strong in the day of battle makes Him joyous in the hour of victory? And that is the love which He bears to His people, for, lo, as He sits down in Heaven, He thinks within Himself, "I have done it, I have finished the work of My people's redemption. Not one of them shall ever perish. No drop of the hail of God's vengeance can fall on them, for it has all fallen on Me. I have been smitten, I have borne the curse and, now, they cannot be cursed, they are delivered." And then His holy mind roves on in meditation, "I have taken away the curse, and I have given them the blessing. I have brought many of them to know and love Me and, in due season, I will bring all the rest. They shall come that are ready to perish, for I must have every one of my blood-bought sheep with Me forever. They shall be blessed on earth and, by-and-by, I shall have them where I am and they shall feed in these rich pastures. They shall lie down where the wolf cannot come and where desolation cannot enter. The time shall come when I shall have their very bones resuscitated, when their flesh that has lain in the dust, shall live again to be with Me—and so shall they all, every one of them, body, soul and spirit regain all the inheritance that they had lost and, with all that double portion which I have gained for them, share the spoil, and wave the palm, and be more than conquerors through what I have done for them." This thought gives sweet rest to the Savior who once labored here below and who, now, in Heaven, "rests in His love."

III. I find that Dr. Gill gives this as one of the meanings of the text, for he is always noted for giving a great variety of meanings to a text. And, sometimes, nobody knows which is the true one. When he is going to explain a passage of Scripture, he says, "It does not mean this, it does not mean that, and it does not mean the other." Probably nobody ever thought it did mean anything of the kind! After he has mentioned several things which it does *not* mean, he mentions some that it *may* mean, and then, last of all, he tells us what it actually does mean! He says our text means, "HE SHALL SOLACE HIMSELF IN HIS LOVE."

There is something very sweet in love. Whether it is sweeter to be loved or to love, I know not, but, certainly, when the two experiences meet together, they are like two noble rivers which have flowed through a rich and fertile country and then combined to make some great lake, or inland sea—then are they broad waters indeed. Now Christ sees our love—the love which He has put into us meets the love which He has poured out towards us—and in both of these He finds a sweet solace. He solaces Himself in love—this cheers and comforts Him. Some men, when they would be cheered on earth, drink the wine which stirs their blood. Some men find comfort in company and the noisy, thoughtless talker makes them glad. Others, when they would be solaced, turn to books—these are their joys. Others, when they would be satisfied, rattle their

gold, look over their mortgages, their estates, their bonds and things of that kind. And there are some men who in this world have nothing sweeter for solace than the love of those who are near and dear to them. The man who loves his home and his family, and finds his little earthly Heaven around his own hearth is one of the happiest men I know. Treasure that thought for a moment—and think of Christ as taking delight in His family.

I never yet heard that Christ rests in His *power*. He has great power—look what He has done. He has built the heavens. He has stretched out the earth and He upholds the clouds with His might. But He never rests there. I know, too, that He has great wisdom—He knows all things in the ages past, in the time present, and in the centuries yet to come. He can unravel mysteries and foretell all things, yet I never heard that He rested in His wisdom. There is a great crowd of angelic spirits, always waiting in His courts above and He, as King, sits in the very center of them all. And before Him principalities and powers cast their crowns—but I never heard that He rested even in their homage. No, our Lord Jesus Christ is like the man who loves his family—He rests in the midst of His own beloved ones—His spouse's bosom, the place where He hears His children cry, where He listens to their prayers, the door at which He receives their thanksgiving and bestows His blessing, the house where they wait on Him and He waits on them, where they commune with Him and He communes with them—that is the place where He rests! He rests in His love, in the midst of the objects of His love—there it is that He finds His own eternal satisfaction, the solace of His heart.

Is not that a sweet thought? It has ravished my soul, while turning it over, to think that Jesus Christ should ever find His rest among the poor sons of men! Long ago it was said of Him, "His delights were with the sons of men," and now that is His rest, too. Oh, how pleasant it is for us to know that our Lord will not sleep anywhere but in the house of His Beloved and beneath no other tree will He recline but beneath the trees of His own right-hand planting! It is very easy for me to say of Christ, "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons," but it is surprising that He should ever say the same of me! I can say of Him, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." But it is amazing for Him to say the same of me, or to turn to some poor saint and say to him, "O Soul, you are weary, but you are My rest, and I am your rest. You are sick, but you are My health, and I am your health. You are sad, but you are My joy, and I am your joy. You are poor, but you are My treasure, and I am your treasure. You are nothing, and yet you are My fullness, and I am your fullness!"

Oh, what a host of precious thoughts we can meditate upon here! We have started a whole covey of sweet things and we might profitably stand still and admire them. It is not merely one sweet thought, but many that are included in this one precious Truth of God, "He will rest in His love." He never rested till He found that all His love was given to us and He will never completely rest till all our love is given to Him!

IV. The Hebrew conveys to us yet another idea. In the margin we read, "HE WILL BE SILENT IN HIS LOVE."

Why is this? What can silence have to do with love? One old divine thinks that Christ means, by this expression, to say that His love is so vast that it can be better heard by His saying nothing than by His attempting to express it. What a great deal Christ has said, in the Scriptures, about His love, and yet listen, O spouse of Christ, the love that He has not spoken is ten times more than anything He has yet said! Oh, yes, there is much love which He has brought out of the treasure house and given to you, but He has much more like it in that Divine heart of His. Some drops of His love you have already received, but those bright clouds on high, those storehouses of His Grace contain treasures of which you have never yet even dreamed! When you read one of the promises, you say, "Ah, this is indeed precious!" Yet, remember that what our Lord has revealed in His Word is not a tenth of what He has not said! He has said many rich things, but there are still richer things. He has not said them, He cannot say them because they are not sayable, they are unutterable, they cannot be declared—at least, not at present. When you get to Heaven, you will hear them, but you cannot hear them here.

You know that the Apostle Paul said, when he was caught up to the third Heaven, he heard words which it was not lawful for men to utter. Perhaps he then heard more of the Savior's love, as though Christ said to him, "I tell you this, but you must not tell it to anyone else—it is not lawful to utter it down below. I have made you a great vessel and you can hold this Revelation, but as for the rest, they are only little vessels—do not tell them anymore, it would burst them. Do not expose them to too great a heat of love, it would consume them—they would die if they knew more—they cannot understand more. I have told them so much of My love that if they only understood all I have told them, they would not be able to live on earth—their hearts would burst for joy and they would be obliged to flee to Me above. Therefore I tell them no more, for they cannot bear it."

So that, you see, there is great preciousness in this rendering, "He will be silent in His love," as if He could not say it, therefore He would not try to say it. He would just leave it alone. One poet, after praising God with all his might, finds that he can go no further and winds up thus—"Come, then, expressive silence, tell His praise." That is just the meaning of the text, as if Christ would say, "I have said a great deal, but My people cannot understand. I will say no more. I shall only now say, 'Come, then, expressive silence, tell My love.'"

There is, however, a meaning that is, perhaps, even more correct. "He will be silent in His love," may mean that He will be silent about His people's faults. From the connection of the text, it looks like this. "The Lord has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy: the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of you: you shall not see evil any more." It looks as if He meant to say He would be silent about their sins. There stands Christ in Heaven today, pleading for His people. Listen! He says nothing to accuse them. Satan may accuse, but Christ never will. The good that His people do is magnified, multiplied, perfected and then presented before the Throne of God—but as for the sins of His people, He has cast them behind His back and all He says concerning those sins is this, "I behold no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel; My anger is

turned away from them; I have blotted out like a cloud their iniquities and, like a thick cloud, their sins.”

Sometimes love makes a man silent. If you hear anything said against one whom you love and you are asked, “Is it not so?” you say, “Well, I am not compelled to bear witness against one whom I love and I will not do so.” You know that our law does not demand of a wife that she shall give evidence against her husband. And, certainly, the Lord Jesus Christ will never give any evidence against His spouse—“He will be silent in His love.” If He were called upon and asked, “Has Your spouse sinned?” His declaration would be, “I am the Sin-Offering on her behalf. I am her Substitute. I have been punished in her place. I can say, ‘You are all fair, My love, there is no spot in you.’” There will not be a word of accusation from Him! She says of herself, “I am all black.” He will not deny it, but He will not affirm it. He says, “There is no spot in you” and He goes on to say that she is all fair in His sight.

O glorious silence! “He will be silent in His love.” So I am inclined to believe it will be at the Last Great Day, when the books shall be opened. Christ will read out the sins of the wicked recorded against them, but, as for the sins of His people, “He will be silent in His love.” I sometimes think that it will be so, though I cannot speak with authority. “No,” He will say, “upon you be the curse—you who lived and died without washing in My blood in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. But as for these, My people, they have had their sins blotted out and I will not read what is obliterated. I will be silent in My love.”

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: LUKE 24.

Verses 1-4. *Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments.* Brothers and Sisters, they might have been much more perplexed if they had found the body of Jesus there, for then His promises would not have been fulfilled and all their hopes would have been blighted forever! Unbelief is often the mother of needless perplexity. The Resurrection of Christ is plain enough to us now, but to those who had seen Him die and whose faith was so very weak, it was a cause for perplexity that they could not find His dead body. They meant to embalm it. They had brought sweet spices with them for that purpose. It was well that it was in their heart, although it was an unwise and needless project. Yet I doubt not that the Lord thought those spices were very sweet and that He accepted them because of the love they represented and, sometimes, you and I, in our ignorance, have tried to do for Christ what He would not wish to have us do, but He has understood our motive and accepted our intention, albeit that there was a mistake lurking behind it.

5-8. *And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek you the living among the dead? He is not*

here, but is risen: remember how He spoke to you when He was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered His words. It is well to know Christ's words, even though we often forget them, because we could not remember them if we had not once known them. Even though our leaky memory lets so much run through, there will be enough remaining in the soul to come back with great sweetness, by-and-by, in some time of special need. Thus, those holy women, who had often ministered to Christ, "remembered His words."

9-12. *And returned from the sepulcher, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the Apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. Then arose Peter, and ran to the sepulcher. He must go and see for himself, impetuous spirit that he was. So he "ran to the sepulcher."*

12. *And stooping down, he beheld the linen cloths laid by themselves and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass. Thus that notable day wore on. Christ had risen, but His people had not risen to full belief in Him—they were still in the grave of distress and doubt, though their Master had left the grave of death.*

13-15. *And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them. Where two, whose hearts are right, and whose talk is heavenly, keep company with one another, Christ is very likely to make a third! Sometimes, when He does not come to one, He reveals Himself to two, as He said to His disciples, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in Heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." And often, when two Believers agree in communion, there is a sweet magnetic force about their fellowship which brings the Savior to them and retains Him in their company.*

16. *But their eyes were restrained that they should not know Him. Oh, these eyes of ours! They let us see a great deal that we had better not see, but there are some things which we might almost die to see, which we see not. I doubt not that often, spiritual beings are about us, but we do not discern them and, certainly, the Master Himself oftentimes draws near, yet our eyes are restrained and we do not see Him. This may even happen at the Communion Table—we may see the signs and symbols, but see not Christ, the signified and symbolized One. It is ill when it is so.*

17-25. *And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that you have one to another, as you walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said to Him, Are You only a stranger in Jerusalem, and have not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And He said unto them, What things? And they said unto Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a*

Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yes, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulcher; and when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulcher, and found it even so as the women had said: but Him they saw not. Then He said unto them, O fools. I feel sure that He said that word very gently—not as you and I might say it, in a pet. Yet, truly, as we read the story, we cannot help feeling that they were very foolish and stupid. Their own tale convicts them. So no wonder Christ said unto them, “O fools”—

25, 26. *And slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses—At the very Pentateuch—*

27. *And all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.* We may well wish that we might have been there. What a privilege it was for those two disciples—a walk and a talk combined! But what heavenly talk—all concerning Himself! I know that you, dear Friends, never relish a discourse unless Christ is foremost in it, but when Christ is the only Subject, and even Scripture itself is made subordinate to the display of Christ, then are you well content!

28. *And they drew near unto the village, where they went.* And sorry, I have no doubt, they were to do so. One would like to walk on to all eternity with Christ thus talking by the way!

28-30. *And He made as though He would have gone further. But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to them.* That was the old sign, well known to them and to Him—that blessing and breaking of the bread.

31. *And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight.* It is sometimes so with us—we have just recognized our Lord, and, lo, He is gone!

32. *And they said, one to another, Did not our heart burn within us—* Oh, blessed heartburn!

32, 33. *While He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures? And they rose up the same hour—*They could not stay away from their fellow disciples—they must tell such glorious tidings as they had, so “they rose up the same hour.”

33-36. *And returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen, indeed, and has appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread. And as they thus spoke, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them.* That is usually His way—while we are talking about manifestations of Christ in the past, He often comes again among us and gives us a new revelation of Himself.

36-41. *And said unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said unto them, Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. And while they yet believed not for joy—That is a singular combination. At first, they believed not for grief—but now the pendulum swings the other way—and they believe not for joy! There is a kind of unbelief that is begotten of excessive delight. We know something to be true and yet there comes the recoil and the doubt, “Surely it is too good to be true; can it really be so?” See how Jesus convinced them that He was not a spirit—“while they yet believed not for joy.”*

41. *And wondered, He said unto them, Have you here any meat? “Anything to eat?”*

42, 43. *And they gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them. That was proof positive that He was still composed of flesh and bones—a real Person—and no phantom.*

44-51. *And He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry you in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high. And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven. He went away in the act of blessing, and He has never left off blessing His people from that day to this.*

52, 53. *And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.*

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