

THE BURDEN OF THE WORD OF THE LORD

NO. 2114

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The burden of the Word of the Lord.”
Malachi 1:1.

THE Prophets of old were no triflers. They did not run about as idle tellers of tales, but they carried a burden. Those who at this time speak in the name of the Lord, if they are, indeed, sent of God, dare not sport with their ministry or play with their message. They have a burden to bear—“The burden of the Word of the Lord.” And this burden puts it out of their power to indulge in levity of life. I am often astounded at the way in which some who profess to be the servants of God make light of their work—they jest about their sermons as if they were so many comedies or farces.

I read of one who said, “I got on very well for a year or two in my pulpit, for my great-uncle had left me a large store of manuscripts, which I read to my congregation.” The Lord have mercy on his guilty soul! Did the Lord send him a sacred call to bring to light his uncle’s moldy manuscripts? Something less than a *Divine* call might have achieved that purpose.

Another is able to get on well with his preaching because he pays so much a quarter to a bookseller and is regularly supplied with manuscript sermons. They cost more or less according to the space within which they will not be sold to another clerical cripple. I have seen the things and have felt sick at the sorry spectacle. What must God think of such Prophets as these? In the old times, those whom God sent did not borrow their messages. They had their message directly from God Himself, and that message was weighty—so weighty that they called it, “the burden of the Lord.”

He that does not find his ministry a burden now will find it a burden hereafter, which will sink him lower than the lowest Hell. A ministry that never burdens the heart and the conscience in this life will be like a millstone about a man’s neck in the world to come.

The servants of God mean business. They do not play at preaching but they plead with men. They do not talk for talk’s sake. But they persuade for Jesus’ sake. They are not sent into the world to tickle men’s ears, nor to make a display of elocution, nor to quote poetry—theirs is an errand of life or death to immortal souls. They have something to say which so presses upon them that they must say it. “Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel!” They burn with an inward fire and the flame must have vent. The Word of the Lord is as fire in their bones, consuming them. The Truth of God presses them into its service and they cannot escape from it. If, indeed, they are the servants of God, they must speak the things which they have seen and heard. The servants of God have no feathers in their caps—they have burdens on their hearts.

Furthermore, the true servants of God have something to carry, something worth carrying. There is solid Truth, precious Truth in their message. It is not froth and foam, phrases and verbiage, stories and pretty things, poetry and oratory, and all that. But there is weight in it of matters which concern Heaven and Hell, time and eternity. If ever there were men in this world who ought to speak in earnest, *they* are the men. Those who speak for God must not speak lightly. If there is nothing in what a man has to say, then God never commissioned him, for God is no trifler.

If there is no importance in their message—yes, if their message is not of the first and last importance—why do they profess to speak in the name of God? It is constructive blasphemy to father God with our nonsense. The true servant of God has no light weight to bear. He has eternal realities heaped upon him. He does not run merrily as one that has a feather-weight to carry—he treads firmly and often, slowly—as he moves beneath “the burden of the Word of the Lord.”

Yet, do not let me be misunderstood at the beginning. God’s true servants, who are burdened with His Word, right willingly and cheerfully carry that burden. We would not be without it for all the world. Sometimes, do you know, we get tempted, when things do not go right, to run away from it—but we view it as a temptation not to be tolerated for an hour. When some of you do not behave yourselves and matters in our Church get a little out of order, I say to myself, “I wish I could give this up and turn to an employment less responsible and less wearing to the heart.”

But then I think of Jonah and what happened to him when he ran away to Tarshish—and I remember that whales are scarcer now than they were then—and I do not feel inclined to run that risk. I stick to my business and keep to the message of my God. For one might not be brought to land quite so safely as the runaway Prophet was. Indeed, I could not cease to preach the glad tidings unless I ceased to breathe. God’s servants would do nothing else but bear this burden, even if they were allowed to make a change. I had sooner be a preacher of the Gospel than a possessor of the Indies. Remember how William Carey, speaking of one of his sons, says, “Poor Felix is shriveled from a missionary to an ambassador.” He was a missionary once, and he was employed by the government as an ambassador. His father thought it no promotion and said, “Felix has shriveled into an ambassador.” It would be a descent, indeed, from bearing the burden of the Lord, if one were to be transformed into a member of Parliament, or a prime minister, or a king. We bear a burden but we should be sorry, indeed, *not* to bear it.

The burden which the true preacher of God bears is for God, and on Christ’s behalf, and for the good of men. He has a natural instinct which makes him care for the souls of others and his anxiety is that none should perish but that all should find salvation through Jesus Christ. Like the Christ who longed to save, so does the true Malachi, or messenger of God, go forth with this as his happy, joyful, cheerfully-borne burden—that men may turn unto God and live. Yet, it is a burden, for all that. And of that I am going to speak to you. Much prac-

tical Truth of God will come before us while we speak of “the burden of the Word of the Lord.” Pray that the Holy Spirit may bless the meditation to our hearts.

I. And why is the Word of the Lord a burden to him that speaks it? Well, first, it is a burden BECAUSE IT IS THE WORD OF THE LORD. If what we preach is only of man, we may preach as we like and there is no burden about it. But if this Book is inspired—if Jehovah is the only God, if Jesus Christ is God incarnate, if there is no salvation except through His precious blood—then there is a great solemnity about that which a minister of Christ is called upon to preach. It therefore becomes a weighty matter with him. Modern thought is a trifle light, as air, but ancient Truths of God are more weighty than gold.

And, first, the Word of the Lord becomes a burden in the reception of it. I do not think that any man can ever preach the Gospel aright until he has had it borne into his own soul with overwhelming energy. You cannot preach conviction of sin unless you have suffered it. You cannot preach repentance unless you have practiced it. You cannot preach faith unless you have exercised it. You may talk about these things—but there will be no power in the talk unless what is said has been experimentally proven in your own soul.

It is easy to tell when a man speaks what he has made his own, or when he deals in secondhand experience. “Son of man, eat this roll”—you must eat it before you can hand it out to others. True preaching is artesian—it wells up from the great depths of the soul. If Christ has not made a well within us, there will be no outflow from us. We are not proper agents for conveying the Truth of God to others, if Divine Grace has not conveyed it to us. When we get God’s Word in our studies, we feel it to be a load which bows us to the ground. We are, at times, obliged to get up and walk to and fro beneath the terror of the threats of God’s Word. And often are we forced to bow our knee before the glory of some wonderful word of the Lord which beams with excessive Divine Grace.

We say to ourselves, “These are wonderful Truths—how they press upon our hearts!” They create great storms within us. They seem to tear us to pieces. The strong wind of the mighty Spirit blows through the messenger of God and he, himself, is swayed to and fro in it as the trees of the forest in the tempest. Therefore, even in the reception of the message of God, it is a burden.

The Word of God is a burden in the delivery of it. Do you think it an easy thing to stand before the people and deliver a message which you believe you have received from God? If you so imagine, I wish you would try it. He that finds it easy work to preach will find it hard work to give an account of his preaching at the Last Great Day. One has carefully to look around and think while he is preaching, “I must mind that I do not put this Truth of God in such a way as to exaggerate it into a falsehood. I must not so encourage the weak that I dwarf the strong. Nor so commend the strong as to grieve the weak. I must not so preach the Grace of God as

to give latitude to sin—I must not so denounce sin as to drive men to despair.”

Our path is often narrow as a razor’s edge, and we keep on crying in our spirit, while we are speaking, “Lord, direct me! Lord, help me to deal wisely for You with all these souls!” The anxieties which we feel in connection with our pulpit work are enough to make us old before our time. I have heard of one who thought he would give up his ministry because he had so small a Chapel into which he could not get more than two hundred people. But a good old man said to him, “You will find it quite hard enough to give a good account of two hundred at the Last Great Day.”

It is an idle ambition to desire a large congregation, unless that desire is altogether for God’s glory. For we only increase our responsibilities when we increase the area of our influence. Still, some are *responsible* for not having a large congregation. If their dullness keeps people from hearing, they do not, thereby, escape from responsibility. To speak aright God’s Word beneath the Divine influence is, in the speaking, as well as in the getting of the message, the burden of the Lord.

When we have preached, the Gospel becomes a burden. “Well, now, it is all done,” says one. Is it? Is it all done? You, dear Teacher, when you have taught your class today, have you done with your children? You have thought of them upon the Sabbath—will there be no care for them all the week? If your soul is towards your children, or your congregation, as it ought to be, you will bear them always on your heart. They will never be far away from you. The mother is gone from home. She is out today, seeing her sister—surely she is not caring about her babe, is she? Is SHE NOT? Why, wherever she is, the tender mother, if she does not bear her child outside her bosom, bears it inside her heart. Her babe is always on her mind.

“Can a woman forget her sucking child?” Can a soul-winner forget his charge? If God sends any of us to do good to our fellow men and to speak in His name, the souls of men will be a perpetual burden to us and we shall constantly cry for their salvation and perpetually, with entreaties and tears, go to God for them and ask Him to bless the message we have delivered.

Oh, that we may have, in all pulpits, ministers who bear the burden of the Lord in the study, in the pulpit, and when the discourse is finished! Once truly a minister, you are always a minister. Your burden clings to you. May you, my Brothers and Sisters, partakers in the holy service of our Lord Jesus Christ, each of you, in your measure, bear the burden of the Word of the Lord, and that continually.

II. I pass to a second point. It is not only a burden because it is so solemnly the Word of the Lord, and therefore weighty and overwhelming, but next, BECAUSE OF WHAT IT IS. What is it that the true servant of God has to bear and to preach?

Well, first, it is the rebuke of sin. I have heard of hirelings who preach, but never think of rebuking sin. It is with them like as in the story of the old Negro preacher, a very popular preacher, indeed, among his black Brothers. His master said, “I am afraid some of your people steal chick-

ens, for I am always losing mine. I wish you would, next Sunday, give them a word about it." "Master," said the preacher, "it would throw such a damp over the congregation if I were to say anything about stealing chickens." So the black preacher avoided that subject.

It seems to me that stealing chickens was the very thing that he ought to have preached about, if that was the sin his Brethren were guilty of. If a man bears the burden of the Word of the Lord, he speaks most to his people upon the evil of which they are most guilty. Somebody once said to me, "Sir, you were very personal." I answered, "Sir, I try to be. Do not think that I am going to apologize for it. If I knew anything that would come home to your heart and conscience concerning sin, I would be sure to say that—just that very thing." "And what if I should be offended?" "Well, I should be very sorry that you refused reproof and should feel all the more sure that it was my duty to be very faithful with you. If after much love and prayer you refused the word, I could do no more. But I certainly should not speak with bated breath to please you. And you would despise me if I did."

I remember one in Oliver Cromwell's day who complained to a preacher. He said, "The squire of the parish is very much offended by some remarks you made last Sabbath day about profane swearing." "Well," said the Puritan preacher, "is the squire in the habit of swearing?" It was admitted that he was and that he therefore thought himself pointed out by the minister. The Puritan replied to the complaining tenant, "If your lord offends my Lord, I shall not fail to rebuke him for it. And if he is offended, let him be offended." So must every true preacher be not concerned of man's esteem—and speak faithfully—and this is a burden to one of a tender spirit.

If there is any topic upon which we *must* of necessity dwell, it must be upon that sin which is most grieving to the Lord. For we must by no means leave an erring Brother unwarned. This is not a work to be coveted. It is neither pleasant to the hearer, nor pleasant to the speaker. And yet to rebuke sin and to rebuke it sharply, is part of the work of him whom God sends. And this makes the Word of the Lord his burden.

And, next, the Word of the Lord gives a rebuff to human pride. The doctrines of the Gospel seem shaped on purpose, among other objects, to bring into contempt all human glory. Here is a man who is morally of a fine and noble nature, but we tell him that he is born in sin and shaped in iniquity—this is a stern duty. Here is a man of a grand righteous character in his own opinion and we tell him that his righteousness is filthy rags—he will not smile on us for this. Here is a man that can go to Heaven by his own efforts, so he thinks, and we tell him that he can do nothing of the sort—that he is dead in trespasses and sins—this will bring us no honor from him.

He hopes that by strong resolves he may change his own nature and make himself all that God would have him. But we tell him that his resolutions are so much empty wind and will end in nothing—this is likely to earn us his hate. Behold, the axe is laid at the root of the tree. Every man, woman, and child stands a convicted criminal, and if saved must owe his salvation entirely to the gratuitous mercy of God. Condemned and

ruined, if he ever escapes from his ruin it must be through the work of the Spirit of God in him and not by his own works. Thus, you see, human nature does not like our message. How it writhes in wrath, how it grinds its teeth against the doctrine which humbles man, crucifies his pride and nails his glory to the gallows! Therefore, such preaching becomes the burden of the Lord.

And then the true preacher has to come into contact with the vanity of human intellect. We ask of man, "Can you, by searching, find God?" You say, "I know." What do you know, poor blind Worm? You say, "I am a judge and I can discern."

What can you discern, you that are in the dark and alienated from God by your wicked works? The things of God are hidden from the wise and prudent but revealed unto babes. And the wise and prudent are indignant at this act revealed of Divine Sovereignty. "Well," says one, "I quarrel with the Bible." Do you? The only real argument against the Bible is an unholy life. When a man argues against the Word of God, follow him home and see if you cannot discover the reason of his enmity to the Word of the Lord. It lies in some form of sin.

He whom God sends, cares nothing at all about human wisdom, so as to dote upon it and flatter it. For he knows that, "the world by wisdom knew not God." And that human wisdom is only another name for human folly. All the savants and the philosophers are simply those who make themselves to be wise but are not so. To face false science with "the foolishness of preaching," and to set up the Cross in the teeth of learned self-sufficiency is a burden from the Lord.

The most heavy burden of the Word of the Lord, however, is that which concerns the future. If you are sent of God and if you preach what God has revealed in His Word, then you say, "He that believes not shall be damned," and you do not hesitate to say that the wrath of God abides on the rejecters of the Savior. You do not hesitate to say—

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

All the romance of the age runs against this. Everybody says, "Be quiet about the wrath to come, or you will have everybody down upon you." Be down upon me, then! I will not soften God's Word to please *anybody*. And the Word of the Lord is very clear on this matter. If you receive not the Lord Jesus Christ, you will die in your sins. If you believe not in Him, you must perish from His Presence. There is a day coming when you will die—after this comes another day when you must appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ and all your actions shall be published and you shall be judged for the things done in the body, whether they are good, or whether they are evil.

And then you shall receive the sentence of, "Come, you blessed," or, "Depart, you cursed." Do you think we like to preach this? Do you think that it is any pleasure to the servant of God to deliver these heavy tidings? Oh, no—very often we speak in the bitterness of our spirit. But we speak because we dare not refrain. It is infinitely better that men should be told

the truth than that they should be flattered by a lie into eternal ruin. He ought to have the commendation of all men, not who makes things pleasant, but who speaks things truly. Somebody is preaching of how to get people *out* of Hell. I preach about how to *keep them away* from Hell.

Don't go there. Keep clear of the fire which never can be quenched. Escape for your lives—look not behind you! Stay not in the plain but hasten to Christ, the Mountain of Salvation, and put your trust in Him. This is it which is the burden of the Word of the Lord. We have grief of heart because of the dreadful future which men prepare for themselves, namely, "everlasting punishment." We are heavy at heart for the many who will not turn to God but persist in destroying their own souls forever. Oh, why will they die? The prospect of their future is a present misery to us.

III. Now, dear Friends, I have, in the third place, to say that it is a burden not only because it is the Word of the Lord and because of what it is, but **BECAUSE OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR BRINGING IT TO YOU.**

Suppose that we do not preach the Gospel and warn the wicked man, so that he turns not from his iniquity, what then? Hear this voice—"He shall perish but his blood will I require at your hand." What will my Lord say to me if I am unfaithful to you? "Where is the blood of those people who gathered at Newington? Where is the blood of that crowd which came together to hear you speak and you did not preach the Gospel to them?" Oh, it were better for me that I had never been born than that I should not preach the Gospel! "Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel" of Christ, for men perish where there is not the Word of God!

I remember Mr. Knill's portrait which was once in *The Evangelical Magazine*, that it had written at the bottom of it, "Brethren, the heathen are perishing—will you let them perish?" So is it with men that hear not the glad tidings. They die in sin. Worse still, men are perishing in *this country*—in the blaze of the Light they sit in darkness. Oh, that we might go and find them and tell them of the Gospel! For, if we carry it not to them, "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they are sent?" What makes it more of a burden to me, is that men may die even if they do hear the word of salvation—men may go from these pews quickly into perdition. Those eyes that look on me tonight, oh, how intently and earnestly!

O Sirs, if you do not look to *Christ*, you will be lost, however well you may have attended to *me*. Now, you listen to each word I utter. But I pray you listen to the Word of God, the heavenly Father, who bids you repent and believe in His dear Son. For "except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." So said the Savior. And this, I say, makes the burden of the message, lest some of you should not receive it.

I cannot bear that one of you should die unforgiven. I look along these pews and I remember some of you a good many years ago. You were then in a hopeful state but you still have not received Christ. Most faithful *hearers* you have been, but you have not been *doers* of the word. Do not think that I charge you too severely. Have you repented and believed?

If not, woe is me that I should bear to you a message which will be a savor of death unto death unto you because you refuse it! For how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? When it has been freely proclaimed to us year after year, what will become of us if we reject it? Do not still refuse to come to Jesus! Do not make me a messenger of death to you. I implore you, receive the message of mercy and be saved.

And, then, it becomes a great burden to me to preach the Gospel when I think of what those lose who will not have it. That Heaven above—what tongue can describe it? What painter can ever picture it—the Heaven above—where all is love and joy and peace and everlasting blessedness? What if you should be shut out? What if against YOU, the door should be closed! There is no opening that door again, remember. Even though you stand and cry, “Lord, Lord!” yet will He not open it to you. May no one of us miss eternal felicity! May no one among us fall into eternal misery! But here lies the burden of the Lord—in the consequences of our ministry.

I remember walking out to preach near unto forty years ago, just when I began my witnessing for the Lord Jesus. As I trudged along with a somewhat older Brother, who was going to preach at another village station, our talk was about our work and he said to me, “Does it not strike you as a very solemn thing that we two local preachers are going to do the Lord’s work and much may depend even upon the very hymns we give out and the way in which we read them?” I thought of that and I prayed—and often do pray—that I may have the right hymn and the right chapter, as well as the right sermon.

Well do I remember a great sinner coming into Exeter Hall and I read the hymn beginning, “Jesus lover of my soul,” and that first line pierced him in the heart. He said to himself, “Does Jesus love *my* soul?” He wept because he had not loved the Savior in return. And he was brought to the Savior’s feet just by that one line of a hymn. It does make it the burden of the Lord when you see life, death and Hell and worlds to come, hanging, as it were, upon the breath of a mortal man, by whom God speaks to the souls of his fellows. This is serious burden-bearing. At least, I find it more and more so the longer I am engaged in it.

IV. But I pass on to notice one thing more now. It is often the burden of the Lord, because of THE WAY IN WHICH MEN TREAT THE WORD OF GOD.

Upon this I will be very brief. Some trifle with it. I was reading last night an account of how people are said to behave who go to Church. It was written by a canon. I dare say he knows. Certainly, some people who go to Nonconformist places are as bad. A servant was asked by her mistress about the sermon. She said it was a very good sermon. “Where was the text, Martha?” “Somewhere in the Bible, ma’am.” “What was it about?”

She did not remember a word of it. One question after another is put to her. She tells her mistress that it was a very nice sermon but she really does not know what it was all about. And the writer goes on to say that a large proportion of our people go off at a tangent while we are talking and their minds are thinking about something else. I hope that it is not quite true of you tonight. A man once went to hear Mr. Whitefield. He was a

shipbuilder and he said, "Oh, that man! I never heard such a preacher as that before. When I have been to other places, I have built a ship from stem to stern—laid the keel and put the mast in and finished it all up, while the parson has been preaching. But this time I was not able to lay a timber. He took me right away."

This preoccupation of human minds makes it such a burden when we are in earnest to reach the heart and win the soul. Our people are sitting here in body but they are far away in spirit. Yonder sits a good woman who is meditating as to how she shall leave her home, tomorrow, long enough to get to the shop to buy those clothes for the children. A gentleman here tonight wonders where he has left that diamond ring which he took off when he washed his hands. Do not let that bother you any more. Sell the stone and give the money away—then it will never trouble you again.

All sorts of cares come buzzing around your brains, when I am wanting them to be quite clear to consider holy subjects. Little pettifogging cares intrude and the preacher may speak his very soul out but it all goes for nothing. This makes our work the burden of the Lord.

Then there is another. It is the number of those who *do* hear, with considerable attention, but they forget all that they hear. The sermon is all done with when they have done hearing it. The last drop of dew is dried up when they get home. Nothing remains of that which cost the preacher so much thought and prayer. And is it not a hard thing to go on "pegging away and pegging away," and have done nothing? The preoccupied mind is a slate and we write on it. And then a sponge goes over it all and we have to write each word all over again.

Few would choose to roll the stone of Sisyphus, which always fell backward as fast as he laboriously heaved it up the hillside. We are willing to do even this for our Lord. But we are compelled to admit that it is burdensome toil. Poor, poor work with some of you. Ah, it is the burden of the Lord to deal with your souls!

Alas, there are some others that hear to ridicule. They pick out some mannerism, or mistake, or something odd about the speaker's language, and they carry this home and report it as raw material for fun. The preacher is in anguish to save a soul, and they are thinking about how he pronounces a word. Here is a man endeavoring to pluck sinners from the eternal burnings, and these very sinners are all the while thinking about how he moves his legs, or how he lifts his hand, or how he pronounces a certain syllable. Oh, it is sickening work—soul-sickening work! It is the "burden of the Word of the Lord," when our life or death message is received in that way.

But when it is received rightly, then are we in the seventh Heaven! Oh, well do I remember one night preaching three sermons, one after the other. And I think that I could have preached thirty, if time had held out. It was in a Welsh village, where I had gone into the Chapel and simply meant to expound the Scripture, while another Brother preached. He preached in Welsh and when it was done, the question was put whether Mr. Spurgeon would not preach. I had not come prepared but I did preach

and there was a melting time. And then we sang a hymn. I think we sang one verse seven or eight times over—the people were all on fire.

The sound seemed to make the shingles dance on the top of the Chapel. When I had done, we asked those who were impressed to stop. They all stopped and so I had to preach again. And a second time they all stopped and I had to preach again. It got on to past eleven o'clock before they went away. Eighty-one came forward and joined the Churches afterwards.

It was but a few months before the terrible accident at Risca, [see Sermon #349, Volume 7] and many of those converted that night perished in the pit. God had sent His Spirit on that glorious night to save them, that they might be ready when He should call them Home.

It was grand work to preach, for they sucked in the word as babes take in milk. They took it into their hearts—it saved their souls. Would we had many such opportunities! And then the Word of the Lord would be no burden—but like the wings of a bird, would make us mount on high and joy would fill every heart!

V. And now I must not detain you. But I want to say, in the fifth place, the Word of the Lord is the greatest burden to the true teacher's heart, because he remembers that HE WILL HAVE TO GIVE AN ACCOUNT.

They are all down, those fifty-two Sabbaths. And those weeknight opportunities—they are all down in the heavenly record and the writing will be forthcoming when required. There will come a time when it will be said, "Preacher, give an account of your stewardship." And at the same time a voice will be heard, "Hearers, give an account of your stewardship, too." What a mercy it will be, if you and I together shall give our accounts with joy and not with grief! A mournful account will be unprofitable for you. What sort of sermons shall I wish I had preached when I come to die? What sort of sermons will you wish that you had heard when you lie on your last beds?

You will not wish that you had heard mere flimsy talk and clever speeches. Oh, no! You will say, as a dying man, "I bless God for weighty words, earnestly spoken, that were a blessing to my soul." I will say no more upon that, although it is the pressing point of the whole matter. Brethren, pray for the preacher. Brethren, pray for yourselves.

I have only these two or three practical words to say. We have to bear the burden of the Lord. But there was one, the Head of our confraternity, the great Lord of All true Gospel preachers, who bore a far heavier burden. "He His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." Preacher, Teacher, do you ever get weary? Look to Him as He bows beneath His Cross! Take up your burden cheerfully and follow after Jesus.

If this work is a burden, we also rejoice in One who can help us. There is One who can make the burden light, or strengthen the shoulder to bear the heavy yoke. Dear People, pray for us that this great Helper may enable us to bear the burden of His Word to your souls. Do not pray that it may not be a burden. Pray that it may be a burden that crushes your pastor to

the very dust. God forbid that he should ever preach without its being a load to him! But pray that he may then be sustained under it. And for every true preacher of the Gospel pray the same prayer. If the Lord is with us we shall not faint but go from strength to strength.

Since it is a burden in itself, I ask you not to make it any heavier. Do not make it intolerable. Some add to it greatly and wantonly. Who are these? Well, I will tell you. Inconsistent professors. When people point to such-and-such a member of the Church and say, "That is your Christian!"—this makes our burden doubly oppressive. What a spoil it is to our testimony for Christ when outsiders can point to one and another and say, "That is how those Christians act!"

Do not plunge us in this sorrow. I do not know why I should be blamed for all the offenses of everybody that comes to hear me. Can I keep you *all* right? Are you like chessmen, that I can move at pleasure to any square on the board? I cannot be responsible for any *one* person—how can I be the guardian of *all*? Yet the preacher of God's Truth is held responsible by many for matters over which he has no power. And this injustice makes his burden heavy.

And, next, do not make our burden heavier by your silence. There was a man of God who had been a very distinguished preacher, and when he lay dying he was much troubled in his mind. He had been greatly admired and much followed.

He was a fine preacher of the classical sort and one said to him, "Well, my dear Sir, you must look back upon your ministry with great comfort." "Oh, dear!" said he, "I cannot. I cannot. If I knew that even one soul had been led to Christ and eternal life by my preaching I should feel far happier. But I have never heard of one."

What a sad, sad thing for a dying preacher! He died and was buried and there was a goodly company of people at the grave, for he was highly respected and deservedly so. One who heard him make that statement was standing at the grave and he noticed a gentleman in mourning, looking into the tomb and sobbing with deep emotion. He said to him, "Did you know this gentleman who has been buried?" He replied, "I never spoke to him in my life." "Then what is it that so affects you?" He said, "Sir, I owe my eternal salvation to him."

He had never told the minister this cheering news and the good man's deathbed was rendered dark by the silence of a soul that he had blessed. This was not right. A great many more may have found the Lord by his means but he did not know of them and was therefore in sore trouble. Do tell us when God blesses our word to you. Give all the glory to God, but give us the comfort of it. The Holy Spirit does the work, but if we are the means in his hands, do let us know it, and we will promise not to be proud. It is due to every preacher of Christ that if he has been blessed to the conversion of a soul

he should be allowed to see the fruit of his labors. And when he does not see it, it adds very sadly to "the burden of the Word of the Lord."

Do you not think that you add to my burden, too, if you do not aid me in the Lord's work? What a lot of idle Christians we have—Christian people who might sing, like mendicants in the street—

***“And got no work to do,
And got no work to do!”***

What a shameful chorus, when the world is dying for lack of true workers! There is a Sunday school—do you know it? “Oh, yes, we know there is one of those excellent institutions” connected with our place of worship. Did you ever visit it? Have you ever helped in it? There is an Evangelists' Society and young men go out to preach. “Oh, dear!” you say, “I never thought of that.” Why do you not go out to preach yourself? Some of you could, if you would.

What are you doing? There are districts where there are tracts to be distributed. Do you know anything about house-to-house visitation? I speak to some who do nothing whatever, unless it is a little grumbling. I wonder whether we

shall ever have a day such as the bees celebrate in its due season. You may, perhaps, have seen them dismissing the unproductive bees. It is a remarkable sight. They say to themselves, “Here are a lot of drones, eating our honey but never making any. Let us turn them out.” There is a dreadful buzz, is there not? But out they go.

I do not propose either to turn you out, or to make a buzz. But if ever those who do work for Christ should burn with a holy indignation against do-nothings, some of you will find the place too hot for you! I am sorrowfully afraid that it will thin my congregation and lessen the number of Church members. I have but little to complain of among my people.

But still, as there is a lazy corner in every village, there is the same in this community. You increase the burden of those who do work, if you are not working with them.

But the greatest increase of the burden comes from those who do not receive the Gospel at all. May there not be one such here tonight, but may everyone now look to Jesus and live! I shall close by asking you to sing the Gospel. Oh, that you may have it in your hearts! The final closing word is this—“There is life in a look at the Crucified One. There is life at this moment for you. Then look, Sinner—look unto Him and be saved—look unto Him who was nailed to the tree.” Amen.

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

GOD'S LOVE SHAMEFULLY QUESTIONED

NO. 2532

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 29, 1897.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 13, 1884.**

***"I have loved you, says the Lord. Yet you say, In what way have You loved us?"
Malachi 1:2.***

Man, by nature, is a lump of ingratitude. He is often ungrateful even to his earthly friends and he is invariably ungrateful to his Best Friend, above, until the Grace of God has changed his heart. Leave him alone and though he may be loaded with mercy, yet he will never bless the hand that gives him the favor. Should he even be allowed to survive so long as a hundred years, unless the Holy Spirit shall deal with him, he will not once remember his God in grateful thankfulness, but he will go on, from the beginning to the end of the century, always receiving, but never rendering back to the Lord anything like gratitude. We often say that ingratitude is one of the worst of sins—and we feel it so when it concerns ourselves. But we quite forget that it must be worse toward God than it is toward us, for, after all, whatever we may do for others, we are only like stepfathers to the blessings we bestow, for every good gift comes directly from the great Father of Lights, even from God, Himself! We may be the channels conveying comfort to others, but the blessing, itself, comes from Him. Shameful, then, is it that all good should come from God and yet that man should be ungrateful to Him who is the great Source of it all. The charge of ingratitude can be made against us *all* as we are by nature—it is not merely of some base, mean, groveling spirits that we are now speaking—but of mankind as a whole, looking at it on a broad scale.

Observe, next, from our text, that the Lord does not like that we should forget His love. He says here, by His servant Malachi, "I have loved you, says the Lord. Yet you say, In what way have You loved us?" And in the prophecy of Isaiah He says, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me." Our ingratitude evidently grieves God's heart—speaking after the manner of men. He cannot bear that we should forget His love—He presses it upon us as a great fact that He has loved us—and He seems astonished that we should, in our ingratitude, ask the shameful question, "In what way have You loved us?"

I am going to show you, dear Friends, that my text has a double bearing and, first, we will view this *Truth of God as it relates to the bulk of men*. There are some to whom God has been exceedingly kind, who are not yet converted. They do not even profess to be His people, yet He has dealt with them in such a way that He might truly say to them, "I have loved you," in the sense in which we read that great Gospel text, "God so

loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." When I have dealt with that point, as God shall help me, we will then *view this Truth as it relates to the Lord's people* and notice that innermost kind of love of which they have tasted. Yet, though God has loved them emphatically, with a very peculiar kind of love, some of them may be in an ill-humor and may be saying, "In what way have You loved us?" An earnest word with them may not be out of place and may do them good.

I. First, then, take the broadest meaning of the text and view THIS TRUTH OF GOD AS IT RELATES TO THE BULK OF MEN.

God had a love to the nation of Israel, yet many in that nation loved Him not, but turned from Him with ingratitude. Even then He still had a *benevolent* affection towards that nation, so that He favored them above all other people, and gave them the means of Grace—and sent to them the Light of God while the rest of the world remained in darkness. Still, I am not going to speak, just now, particularly concerning Israel, but to show the bearing of my text upon many who are living today, whether Jews or Gentiles.

Let us begin by considering *the announcement of the text*. "I have loved you, says the Lord." There are many who have very specially participated in God's favor in the form of *sparing love*. They are yet alive—it is a wonder that they are, for they have passed through a great many accidents. Others have been killed by very small things, but, dear Friends, very *great* things have not killed you. You have been very sick. Disease has laid you low. Several times you have been on the very borders of the grave—the mold seemed to slip away from beneath your feet and you were almost entombed! The doctor thought that there was little hope of your recovery and others thought so, too. Yet here you are, still in the land of the living! You have had perils in rivers, perils on the deep, perhaps perils in battle. You have passed through all manner of perils, yet you have been kept alive with death so near! God has very graciously and mercifully preserved you. He has not allowed you to die in your sins. You are getting rather old, too. I perceive that your hair is pretty thickly sown with gray and from others it has almost gone. I see a bald head here and there, or else the snows of many winters lie white above your brow. Getting on to 70 and yet you have not yielded yourself to Christ—is it so with any whom I am now addressing?

Seventy years of *sparing mercy*! Truly, God has favored you exceedingly. I do not suppose you are so long-suffering as that with any of your fellow creatures! There are some with whom God has had great patience who have not much patience of their own. If anybody offends them, it is a word and a blow and, sometimes, it is a blow first! But here is the Lord provoked to jealousy every day for 50, 60, 70 years—and all that while He has held back His hand from smiting. All these 70 years that tree has stood in the orchard and it has borne no fruit as yet to repay the Owner's labor and care—yet has put back the axe again and again, and said, "Let it alone, let it alone, let it alone this year also." It cannot be always so, you know. And, still, in your case, my unconverted Friend, up to the pre-

sent there has been much sparing love on the Lord's part in permitting you to cumber the ground so long.

That is not all, for there are also many in whom God has exhibited a great amount of *restraining love*. Read the life of John Newton—in his early days he went on board ship, dealt in slaves, traded on the African coast and, at length, became enslaved himself! He went to great lengths in sin, yet he said that there was always something which seemed to check him and hold him back—and no doubt he would have perished in his sin if it had not been that God had put that check upon him. There are some who would have drunk themselves to death long ago, but they could not get the drink, for they were too poor to purchase it. What a blessing that was for them! And there is many a man who would have gone to great excess of riot, but he has had a broken leg, or he has had some infirmity so that he could not do as others did. And if he is not now among the blackest of the black, it is because he could not be. How grateful men ought to be when God thus restrains them from sin! Though not yet saved, it is a great thing to have been kept back from atrocious crimes and open sins.

In a field, one day, I saw a horse that had a clog on its foot—a thing I do not admire at all. So I asked the owner why the horse was so fettered. "Well," he said, "that horse has the bad habit of leaping over the hedges. And if he were free, we could never keep him anywhere. So I would a great deal sooner clog him than lose him." Some of you have, perhaps, had a clog on your lives and you are likely to still have it because the Lord does not mean to lose you! He will not let you get away from Him. I have seen hogs in the country with great collars round their necks, so that they should not be able to break through the hedge—when they wanted to ramble out of the field, they could not. So, sometimes, a man will, by his very poverty and infirmity, be prevented from going into sin which otherwise he would have committed and which would have been to his eternal ruin—and it is a clear proof of the love of God that He has thus restrained him!

I have known others who have been kept back by the check which their early training has had upon them. There are some who cannot sin as others do, for a mother's tears are still remembered by them, and a father's holy example tethers them to something like morality. It is true that they go as far as they can, but there is a something which will not let them find that pleasure in sin which others do. They drink of the cup of devils, but it does not taste to them as it tastes to their companions—the dregs of it are bitter and they often feel that it will not do for them though it does for others. Surely, the Lord is thus saying to them, "I have loved you in thus restraining you and holding you back from sin."

But what a great proof of Divine affection it is when *inviting love* is added to sparing love and restraining love! Many of you have been placed where you have heard the Gospel faithfully preached. It is one thing to go to a place of worship, but I am sorry to say that it is quite another thing to hear the Gospel—for there are places of worship where the newest and strangest thing to the congregation would be a real Gospel discourse! But many of you, dear Friends, have heard the Gospel from your childhood.

You know about the Fall and about the only way of recovery from it. You have heard of the atoning blood and of the way of salvation by simple faith in Jesus Christ. What a blessing it is to even *hear* the Word! There are millions of the human race who have never heard the Good News—and millions, I fear, will yet die without having even heard the *name* of Jesus! Even in our own country and under the semblance of religious teaching, what masses of people we have who never hear the Gospel—they hear about forms and ceremonies, and they are deceived by the falsehoods of priest-craft, but the Truth of God, as it is in Jesus, is an untold tale to them. So, if you have heard the Gospel, and heard it often, there has been, in that privilege, a wonderful manifestation of the love of God to you! Yet, more than that, you have had full, free, earnest, honest, loving entreaties to come to Christ that you may find life in Him. And you have been assured, time out of mind, that, “whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,” and that, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” I cannot boast of anything I have done for some of my hearers, but this I can say—if I could know how to preach the Gospel more plainly than I have done, I would be willing to go to school to learn the art of it. I have preached as best I could and, oftentimes, when I might have uttered a fine sentence, or used a pretty expression, I have flung it to the winds that I might say something short and sharp that would cut deep into the conscience and the heart! I care not what men think of me—I want them to think well of my Master and ill of themselves! I want them to escape from sin and fly to Calvary’s Cross and find eternal salvation there. And it is no small privilege and favor from God for them to be honestly dealt with by the Lord’s servant and to be earnestly entreated to fly to Christ for mercy. “I have loved you, says the Lord.” If you want more proofs than these that I have mentioned, they could be given, but there is not time for more just now, as we must pass on to our next point.

After the announcement in the text, “I have loved you, says the Lord,” there is a *sentence of complaint*—“Yet you say, wherein have You loved us?” “How has God ever loved me?” one asks—“I have not a coat on my back.” But how did you come to be without a coat? You drank yourself into this state, did you not? And you think it would be a token of love from God if He were to let you continue to lead a drunken dissolute life and yet have all you want? Why, would not this great sinful London become a thousand times worse than it is if drunkenness did not bring a man to poverty and rags? Would it be any evidence of God’s love to men if He allowed them to live in debauchery and drunkenness, and yet still have all the comforts of this life and not to come to need? I tell you, among all men, I pity most the young lord who has so much gold and silver that he may squander as he pleases and indulge himself in every vice—and then begin again in his evil course! What can that man do but go to the devil unless God’s Grace shall stop him?

I talked, some time ago, to a young man who bears a very honored name. His father was one of the best Christian men I have known, yet the son seemed to take a pride in telling me of all his ways of sin. His father’s name was not as sacred to him as it was to me, but a thing to be

spat upon! Although he could not truthfully find a fault in his father, yet to him, he was “a fool.” As for the young man, when he went on to tell me his story, everything grieved me till he said that he was greatly serving his country by improving the breed of horses and that he had taken to racing. “Oh,” I said, “I feel rather glad to hear *that*, for now you will soon get cleaned out. Your money will speedily be gone and that, I trust, will be the way home for you.” I asked him whether he knew why Satan did not drive express trains to Hell and when he said that he did not know, I told him that it was because he had found that racehorses carried men and women there faster than anything else that he could invent! And I added that I hoped that, one of these days, he might get a heavy fall and so find himself in the hands of that Great Surgeon who would give him a new heart and a right spirit. We would not encourage any man in any sin whatever, but, sometimes it does happen that the climax of sin becomes the turning-point of the sinner!

It is a great mercy for many of you working men that if you go even a little distance in certain sins, you get pulled up. Instead of its being an evidence of harshness on God's part, it is often a token of special favor. I know that I have often had an opportunity of speaking to men very plainly about their sinful state when they have fallen into trouble—and I have seen a little tenderness in them, then—and there has been an opportunity of bringing before them the claims of Christ. Suppose, now, the father in the parable, when his son was feeding the swine in the far country, had said, “There is my dear boy in great poverty. He is very hungry. I will send him a basket of provisions. He has begun to be in need, so I will make him a present of clothes and money just as if he were at home”? What would have been the effect of such treatment? Why, the prodigal would have stayed in the far country and would have died there, away from his father! His hungry belly was the best blessing that he could have had, with the exception of his father's love! “When he came to himself,” through his hunger and need, *then* he said, “I will arise and go to my father.” And the miseries of men, though brought on by their own sin, are often God's voice saying to them, “The way of transgressors is hard. Turn you, turn you: why will you die?” Leave that evil road.” You who are living in sin have only to look at your afflictions to see, at once, evidences that God has loved you!

I am also addressing a great many others who ought to see God's love to them in their mercies. You have a wife and children about you. You have a good business by which you are able to earn your bread even in these days of keen competition. You have good health and a thousand earthly comforts. O my dear Friend, when there is so much poverty and starvation in this great city, should you not be grateful to God? You may well say—

**“Not more than others I deserve,
Yet God has given me more.”**

The very least you can do, surely, is to serve Him and obey His gracious message. If looked at aright, our mercies and our miseries are equally proofs of love. And there are some to whom God has given very choice tokens of love. You, dear Friend, had a holy father—that was no

small blessing. You had a godly mother—that was another great mercy. You have a praying wife—I do not know a more priceless gift than that! There are some whom I know who cannot get down to Hell, though they seem to try to do so, for, whichever way they move, there is somebody or other praying for them! And they are conscious that, at this very moment, they are the subject of some loved one's prayer. Surely, God has an eye of love upon those whom He has encompassed with His own dear servants who, day and night, are praying for them!

There are others, to whom God has given a very special favor, namely, a tender conscience. When I was a child, if I had done anything wrong, I did not need anybody to tell me of it. I told myself of it and I have cried myself to sleep many a time with the consciousness that I had done wrong! And when I came to know the Lord, I felt very grateful to Him because He had given me a tender conscience. Never tamper with conscience, dear Friends, or seek to make it less sensitive. It will soon get two or three skins over it and become as hard and callous as a farm laborer's hands. It is a great mercy to have the conscience so tender that it bleeds at the slightest touch of sin—and I know some of you who have not yet given your hearts to Christ, who, nevertheless, have a very tender conscience. It is a great help to any man who has it—and you have no need to say, "In what way have You loved me?" You have proof enough of the Lord's favor in the fact of His giving you such sensitiveness to sin! Take care that you do not lose it by the abuse of the privilege.

I have thus put before you God's announcement, and God's complaint.

I close this part of my discourse by reminding you of the *suggestion* in the text. Does it not suggest to you, my dear Hearer, that you should thank God for all His favors towards you if you have been thus loved? Do not be like the hog that eats the acorns under the oak, but never lifts up its head to bless the tree that gives it its food. It is better, as John Bunyan tells us, to imitate the little chicken that never sips a drop of water without lifting its head as if to thank God for every drop it drinks. God give to every one of you a thankful heart! Should it not also be natural to you to try to please Him? But "without faith it is impossible to please Him." If there were anything you could do for God, would you not do it? "This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent." Do you not think that after all His goodness to you, you should trust Him? Do trust Him—He will never deceive you. Lean upon Him—He will not fail you. And then love Him. May the Holy Spirit lead you to do so!

II. Now, in the second place, we are to VIEW THIS TRUTH AS IT RELATES TO THE LORD'S PEOPLE, those to whom God can say, emphatically, in the highest, deepest, fullest sense, "I have loved you."

And, first, we will notice the *statement on God's part*. "I have loved you, says the Lord." Now that I am addressing those who are in Christ, what a fullness there is in my subject! God loved you, my Brothers and Sisters, long before the world was made! The verse from which our text is taken goes on to speak of Jacob and Esau, and of God's choice of Jacob. So, dear Friends, there was an *electing love* in your case as well as in Jacob's—

"What was there in you that could merit esteem,

Or give the Creator delight?"

Yet He *did* take delight in you even from eternity! Perhaps you are the only converted one in your family—to you has been fulfilled that ancient promise, “I will take you, one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion.” I looked with something of wonder upon a Sister who came, this week, to join the Church. She could not remember anyone in her family, as far back as she could go, or any relative of any sort, who ever made any profession of religion, or went to any place of worship. She herself was an amazing instance of how the Grace of God gets at some people! There she was, all by herself, like a brand plucked out of the fire. Some of us have had the same experience, while others of us have the still greater joy of belonging to a family where all or nearly all love the Lord—yet it is equally wonderful to us that God has loved us and our families—and set us apart for Himself.

If you begin your meditation there, at the wellhead of *discriminating Grace and electing love*, before all worlds, you can go right on and find some Covenant mercy always at your feet, for the Lord who loved His people gave His Son to die for them! Oh, what love was this! “Herein is love.” Giving His Son to die *for* them, He gave His Spirit to live *in* them. Here is wondrous love, again—that the Spirit should come and call us, quicken us, renew us, sanctify us and *dwell in us* and keep us to this day! If we would speak of the love of God toward His people, where shall we begin and where shall we leave off? Everything that God does to His people is all love—sometimes the love is a little disguised, but the love is always there! If He caresses, it is love. If He chastens, it is love. If He smiles, it is love. If He frowns, it is love, for God is Love and to His people nothing else but Love—infinite, boundless, eternal, immeasurable, inexhaustible, unchangeable, perpetual Love! Oh, the Lord has indeed loved His people, and He does love them, and He will love them, and must love them forever and forever! Let their hearts be glad in this fact.

Now we must turn to quite another phase of our subject, that is, *evil questioning on our part*. “Yet you say, wherein have You loved us?” God’s people sometimes get into a very ugly temper—some who are in the Lord’s family are very strange individuals. I would not speak evil of dignitaries—and every child of God is a priest and a king and, therefore, I must mind what I say. But, really, some of them are strange people, at least at times. An old woman told John Newton she was sure that God chose her before she was born, for He never would have chosen her afterwards. And I think there is some truth in that remark as regards others of the chosen family, for they do seem, sometimes, to get into such an odd condition that one does not know what to make of them. I think, no, I am sure I have heard them say to the Lord, by their actions if not in words, “In what way have You loved us?”

This has happened when they have been in very special trial. One of them said, “All the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning.” As much as to say that God whipped him every morning as soon as he was up and kept on whipping him all day long! And he also said, “I was envious of the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked, for there are no bands in their death: and their strength is firm.

They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Verily," he added, "I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence." "Oh!" says somebody, "that was Judas Iscariot who talked like that." No, it was not! It was Asaph, one of the sweet singers of Israel! But he was getting a long way from the right state of mind when he wrote such words as those. And only the Grace of God brought him back—and he had to say, "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You." That was a wonderful confession for a man of God to have to make. "Oh!" says one, "then he is very much to be condemned." So he is, but mind that you do not have to be condemned for the same sort of thing, for when a man who once was well-to-do comes to be very poor—when he is also racked with disease so that all his nerves are affected and his spirits sink, he may do what others before him have done!

He is not to be justified, even then, in speaking or thinking harshly of God! It is a great sin and a great wrong under any circumstances, yet it is done, and it is a grievous thing that it should be done. And I pray any child of God who is now doing it to leave off before he is made to smart for it under the Lord's rod. He will not endure such treatment from you. He tells you that He loves you and He wants you to believe it and to know that all your trials and troubles are sent in love and that, in the end, you shall see that all these things have worked together for your good, seeing that you love God and are the called according to His purpose. I do not know to whom this message especially belongs, but I am certain that there is somebody here who ought to take this Truth of God home to his heart and cease from being envious of the wicked and fretting against the ungodly.

Sometimes this evil questioning happens when a true child of God gets sad and depressed. A man may be very brave and full of joy—and the hand of God may be suddenly laid upon him and his spirits may sink almost down to despair. At such times, though it ought not to be the case, yet it often happens that the Christian begins to say, "How can God have loved *me*? I am so low, so sad, so depressed—it cannot be that He loves *me*." Do not talk like that, dear Friend! Grieve not the Holy Spirit by saying anything of the kind! But turn to your God and say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." "It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him." He has made your Heaven secure! He has given you Christ! He has given you a new heart and a right spirit! And He says that you shall shortly be with Him enthroned above the skies! Therefore do not begin to ask, "In what way have You loved me?"

And, lastly, I have known this question come from professors when they have begun to backslide. When they have grown cold in heart and indifferent in spirit, then they have said, "The Lord does not love us; we have no evidences and tokens that He does." Do you remember what the prodigal's elder brother said to his father? "Lo, these many years have I served you, neither transgressed I at any time your commandment: and yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends." He said, in effect, that he never had any joy! He was just a servant in the house and nothing more. But if he had had no joy, whose fault was it? What did his father say to him? "Son, you are always with me, and all

that I have is yours." If he had liked, he might not only have taken a kid, but a dozen kids and all the goats and sheep his father had, for they were all his own! If a Christian is not happy, let him blame himself, not his Lord!—

***"How vast the treasure we possess!
How rich Your bounty, King of Grace!
This world is ours, and worlds to come—
Earth is our lodge and Heaven our home.
All things are ours—the gift of God,
The purchase of a Savior's blood!
While the good Spirit shows us how
To use and to improve them too."***

So we ought to be glad and to rejoice! And if we do not, it is because we have grown cold and have wandered away from our Lord. If any of you are saying, "In what way have You loved us?" drop that question at once and come home to your Father, and let your Father's heart be a fountain of delight to you—for He loves you and always will!

I should like to stop just now if you will all think over this one thought. It will not trouble you. It is the sweetest thought and yet it is the simplest that ever can be. Let everyone who believes in Christ try to get the marrow out of this truth. "The Lord *loves* me." Not merely that the Lord pities me—thinks of me—cares for me—all that is true. But the Lord *loves* me, the Lord *loves* me, *the Lord* loves me! Oh, the sweet savor of that word, "love"—to be loved of the great heart which sustains the universe! O child of God, you are as much loved of God as if He had not another child to love! You have all His love, as much as if there were none but you for Him to love! Will you not be glad and rejoice in Him? Cease your murmuring and lift up your soul in song—and bless and praise His holy name from this time forth, and even for evermore! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ROMANS 9.

Paul begins by expressing his great sorrow because the Jews had rejected Christ.

Verses 1-3. *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that I, myself, were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.* They hated Paul intensely—nothing could surpass the malice of the Jews against the man whom they reckoned to be an apostate from the true faith because he had become a follower of Christ, the Nazarene. Yet note what is Paul's feeling towards his cruel countrymen! He is willing, as it were, to put his own salvation in pawn if by doing so the Jews might but be saved! You must not measure these words by any hard grammatical rule, you must understand them as spoken out of the depths of great loving heart. And when such a heart as Paul had, begins to talk, it speaks not according to the laws of logic, but according to its own immeasurable feelings. There were times when he almost thought that he would, himself, consent to be accursed, "anathema," cast away, separated from Christ—if thereby he

could save the house of Israel, so great was his love towards them! Of course, this could not be, and no one understood better than Paul did that there is only one Substitute and one Sacrifice for sinners. He only mentioned this wish to show how dearly he loved the Jews, so that on their account he had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh.

Do you, dear Friends, feel that same concern about your brethren, your kinsmen according to the flesh? If they are not saved, do you greatly wonder that they are not if you have no such concern about them? But when once your heart is brought to this pitch of agony about their souls, if it is our Lord's will, you will soon see them saved!

4, 5. *Who are Israelites; to whom pertains the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.* This was what troubled the Apostle so much concerning the Jews—that they should have such extraordinary privileges and yet should be cast away, but most of all that Jesus Christ, the Savior of men, should be of their race, bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh—and yet they would not receive Him, or be saved by Him! Oh, the terrible hardness of the human heart! And what poor things the richest privileges are unless the Grace of God goes with them to give us the inner secret of true faith in Christ!

6. *Not as though the Word of God has taken no effect.* Paul is always jealous lest anyone should suppose that the Word of God has failed, or that the purpose of God has come to nothing.

6, 7. *For they are not all Israel which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children.* Now he goes on to show that the blessings of God's Grace do not go according to carnal descent. It is true that God promised to bless the seed of Abraham, yet He meant that word, "seed," in a very special sense.

7. *But, In Isaac shall your seed be called.* By passing over Ishmael, God showed that there was nothing of saving efficacy in *blood or birth*. Ishmael was the first-born son of Abraham, but he was passed by, for the promise was, "In Isaac shall your seed be called."

8-10. *That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the Word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac.* When there were twins to be born of her.

11-13. *(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of Him that calls), it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.* Here were two children born at the same time, yet Esau was not of the true "seed." It matters not how closely you may be connected with the people of God—unless you have a new heart and a right spirit, yourself, you *still* do not belong to the Covenant seed, for it is not of the flesh that this privilege comes, but God has chosen a *spiritual seed* according to His own good pleasure.

14. *What shall we say, then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid!* Paul knew very well that there would always be some who would cry out against this doctrine, that men would say that God was partial and unjust. If he had not foreseen that the declaration of this doctrine would provoke such remarks, he would not have put it so—“What shall we say, then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid!”

15, 16. *For He said to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.* You know that the modern way of meeting objections to Scripture is to give up everything to the infidel and then say that you have won him—but the true Christian way is to give up *nothing at all*—and if the Truth of God is objectionable, to make it, if possible, still *more objectionable*, to turn the very hardest side it has, right in front of the face of man, and to say, “This is God’s Truth—refuse it at your peril.” I believe that half the attempts to win over unbelievers by toning down the Truths of God have simply been to the dishonoring of the Truths of God and the destruction of the doubter—and that it would always be better to do as the Apostle does here—not to disavow the Truth of God, but to proclaim it as fully, faithfully and plainly as possible. Let us again read what he says here—“Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid! For He says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.”

17. *For the Scripture says unto Pharaoh.* Paul is now going to show the other side of the same Truth of God—“The Scripture says unto Pharaoh.”

17-19. *Even for this same purpose have I raised you up, that I might show My power in you, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore has He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will, He hardens. You will say, then, unto me, Why does He yet find fault? For who has resisted His will?* Paul knew that the doctrine would be objected to on this ground. Evidently he intended to assert something which was open to this objection, which would naturally suggest itself to men—“Why does He yet find fault? For who has resisted His will?”

20-25. *No but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom He has called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As He says also in Hosea, I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.* See the grand style in which God talks to men? He speaks after a royal fashion—“I will.” He asks no man’s permission for what He will do—“I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.”

26. *And it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said unto them, You are not My people. Though He, Himself, had said it,*

26. *There shall they be called the children of the living God. See the splendor of this Divine Sovereignty which shows itself in wondrous, unexpected acts of Grace, selecting and taking to itself those who seem to be self-condemned, and even condemned by Himself, of whom He had said, "You are not My people"?*

27-31. *Isaiah also cries concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel are as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: for He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. And as Isaiah said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrah. What shall we say, then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith? But Israel, which followed after the Law of righteousness, has not attained to the Law of righteousness? Does it not seem strange that men who were outwardly sinful, who were utterly ignorant of any way of righteousness and even indifferent to it, have been, by the Grace of God, led to seek righteousness in the right way, namely, by faith in Christ, and they have found it, and God's electing love is seen in them? While others, who seem very sincere and devout as to outward ritual, by following it and it, alone, have missed their way and never found the true righteousness? The Sovereignty of God appears in the choosing of those who follow the way of *faith* and the casting away of those who follow the way of mere outward righteousness. But why did Israel miss the way?*

32, 33. *Why? Because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the Law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense. I say again that there have been great attempts made with logical dynamite to blow up this great rock of offense and to clear away every difficulty from the path of the man who wants to be saved by his own method, and to make everything pleasant all around for him. But against this course of action we bear our continual protest, for it is not according to the mind of God, or the teaching of His Word— "As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense."*

33. *And whoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed. But if they believe not on Him, they shall, one day, be ashamed and, meanwhile, the eternal purpose of God shall still stand! He shall still be glorious whatever men shall do, or shall not do!*

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LOVE'S LAMENTATION

NO. 2782

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 8, 1902.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 28, 1878.**

*"I have loved you, says the LORD. Yet you say,
In what way have You loved us?"
Malachi 1:2.*

THE children of Israel had passed through great trouble, but all of it was brought upon them by their own sin. Yet, in their time of trouble, God had remembered them in the greatness of His Grace and mercy. They had been carried into captivity in Babylon and there they had wept when they remembered Zion. They had been scattered over the face of the earth, but God had heard their groans and had restored them to their own land and given them a period of peace and prosperity. But now that they were cured of idolatry, they fell into self-righteousness, indifference and worldly mindedness. The ordinances of God's house were neglected, or, if they were attended too outwardly, it was in such a careless, heartless manner that God was insulted by their worship rather than adored thereby. For these reasons, new sorrows were caused to fall upon them, for, under the old dispensation, it was God's rule that His obedient people were a prosperous people—but whenever they wandered in heart away from Him, then they began to suffer. His message to them, by Moses, was, "If you will walk contrary unto Me, I will walk contrary unto you, also, in fury and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins"—and so they found it. They were, therefore, now in a very sad condition, but they had no consciousness of the real cause of it. They were fretting and fuming against God instead of striking out boldly at their sins—complaining of the severity of the Divine chastisement rather than confessing the iniquity by which they had brought the rod upon themselves!

So God sent His servant Malachi, the last of a long train of Prophets, to seek to bring them to repentance—to try to touch their hearts and consciences by reminding them of His manifold favor and of their base ingratitude towards Him who had treated them so graciously and with such undeserved mercy. This is to be the subject of my discourse. I want, if I can, to get at men's hearts. I shall not have much to say by way of instruction—I want, rather, to speak so as to impress and awaken my

hearers, seeking to set your consciences at work so that all of us—for I hope there will be something to touch us all—may be compelled to bow before God in true repentance and with genuine confession of sin.

The text seems to me to contain two things and to suggest a third. First, here is *the lamentation of love*—“I have loved you, says the Lord.” Secondly, here is *the insensibility of ingratitude*—“Yet you say, In what way have You loved us?” They would not see any signs and tokens of God's love, for they did not believe in it. And the third thing on which I am going to speak is *the discoveries of Grace*, for, though it is not in the text, the text leads us to think of it and the 5th verse tells us of it—“Your eyes shall see, and you shall say, The Lord will be magnified from the border of Israel.”

I. Our first theme, then, is to be THE LAMENTATION OF LOVE—“I have loved you, says the Lord.”

The lamentation is abrupt and appears to end without completing its own sense. It is the exclamation of unrequited affection—“I have loved you, says the Lord.” It is a sorrowful lament—as the eyes of God rest on His rebellious people, He seems to say to them, “You are acting thus wickedly against Me, yet I have loved you. You offer polluted bread upon My altar. You bring the blind, the lame and the sick as sacrifices unto Me and thus you treat Me with derision, yet I have never treated you so, for I have loved you, says the Lord,” as if He were about to say a great deal more, but suddenly stopped. His grief would not let Him say more, so the sentence stands in its rugged majesty of pathos, “I have loved you, says the Lord.”

Taking this expression, first, in its lowest sense, namely, *the love of benevolence*, it applies to all mankind. The Lord can still say to those who forget Him and care nothing for Him, “I have loved you.” Great masses of mankind live as if there were no God. If God were really dead it would, apparently, not make the slightest difference in their thoughts and feelings. They are, practically, dead to Him and they act as if He were dead to them. The Lord seems to me to be speaking to some of you who never appear to have any thought about Him—and He says to you, “I have treated you lovingly. I have permitted you to live and kept you in being. You are not suffering pain—the blood leaps in your veins, you are in robust and vigorous health, yet, alas—you are spending that strength in sin! Your children have been spared to you. Your house is replete with comfort and you have no little satisfaction in the things of this life. I gave you all these things—your corn, your wine and your oil—and I have clothed you and kept you alive. Shall I still keep on loving you in this fashion, loading you with benefits, causing you to prosper, giving you all that heart can wish—and will you, in return, continue to be hard, cold and indifferent to Me? Must I still be your Benefactor and you remain an ingrate? Must I, from morning to night, and from night to morning, visit

you with kindness, and shall I never have anything from you but sullen silence and heartless indifference?"

There are some of you who have been so prospered in the things of this world and who have been made so happy in your homes, that you ought to love the Lord who has done such great things for you! And He seems to say to you, through my lips, "I have loved you. Will you never remember Me, never thank Me, never give yourself up to Me, never accept Me as your Father and your Friend?" It is a natural and just lament of love that it should have done all this and yet should be reciprocated by forgetfulness.

Certain men, however, go further than simply forgetting God, for they actively oppose Him. They can never seem to find language foul enough to apply to the religion of Jesus Christ. Those who are zealous on behalf of religion are described by them as cants, hypocrites and I know not what besides. And anything like conscientiousness is ridiculed by them as Phariseeism. They know better, but that is the way in which they oppose God. Yet, as He looks upon them in pity, He can say to them, "I have loved you. You oppose Me, but why do you act so?" When our Lord Jesus was upon the earth and the Jews took up stones again and again to stone Him, He said to them, "Many good works have I showed you from My Father; for which of those works do you stone Me?" He had healed their sick, satisfied their hunger and bestowed upon them countless gifts—yet, again and again, they took up stones to stone Him, so He said to them, "Why do you act thus towards Me?" And God might speak to many of you in similar style and say, "I have dealt with you in love and you have scoffed at Me and opposed Me and I have only met your opposition with a still greater display of love! With a strange perseverance of unappreciated and unrequited love, I have still pursued you—then why do you rebel against Me as you do?"

I might speak to some of you in another strain. O Sir, your mother died rejoicing in hope! Then why do you hate that Christ who was her joy and delight? Has the Lord Jesus Christ ever made your children become unkind to you? Has He ever been the means of any wrong being done to you? You know that it has not been so, but that all His influence among the sons of men has been for the good of the whole commonwealth and for the establishment of peace and righteousness the world over! Why, then, do men oppose Him so fiercely? Some of them seem almost to foam at the mouth whenever they mention His sacred name. Well may He, then, as He looks upon the atheist and the Socinian, say to them, as He says to so many more, "I have treated you with love, yet this is the only return I receive from you. Shall it always be so?"

The same expression may be used concerning the many who have long heard the Gospel and who yet remain unsaved. Now I can speak personally to a great many of you who are here. God has indeed shown His

love to you in permitting you to meet with us in this House of Prayer. You might have been born in some far-off country where you would have been taught the abominations of Paganism, or Romanism, or Mohammedanism. The name of Jesus might never have been sounded in your ears—yet it has been and, with many of you, from your very childhood! I will not speak in praise of my own ministry, but I will say this—I have always preached the Gospel to the best of my ability. All that I have known of the Word of God, I have spoken and I have tried to use the best words that I could get together in proclaiming the Gospel message. And seeing that so many hundreds and even thousands have found the Lord Jesus Christ here, I am right in saying that you have been in a highly privileged place. You have had opportunities given to you which are denied to a great many people—and God has proved that He has loved you in giving you such privileges. If you still remain hearers only, and not doers of the Word, I can fancy my Lord and Master weeping over you as He wept over Jerusalem, when He said, “How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!”

The words of our text will also be applicable to many when they come to die. When God comes to look back upon the whole of a man's life and to recall the way in which He has treated that man from the first day of his history to the last, He will be able to say to many a man who will die unregenerate, “Yet, I loved you. I put you into the arms of a woman who taught you to fear My name. I placed you in circumstances that ought to have led you to thought, to prayer, to repentance and to faith. I have preserved your life and cared for you until now that you lie there dying, and you will be lost because of despised mercy and unrequited love! I called, but you refused! I stretched out My hands, but you regarded not—and now you are lost and must be driven away from My Presence forever—not because I treated you roughly, or denied to you the message of salvation, or shut you out of Heaven, but because you yourselves spurned My love and set at nothing all My entreaties.”

I think I once told you the story of a godly woman who was wonderfully kind to her very unkind and wicked husband. She was so obedient, gentle, affectionate and patient that he even boasted about what a good wife he had. And in company, one night, long past the hour of midnight, he said that if he took his drunken companions home with him, late as it was, she would receive them like a lady and prepare a supper for them—and never show by word or sign that it was hard upon her, or that they were not welcome. And it came true! When he took them home, she got together such things as she had and made a decent feast for them. And one of them addressed her, afterwards, and said that they had come there as the result of a wager—and they could not understand how she could have patience with such a man as her husband was, for they

themselves felt ashamed of the way he had acted towards her. When they pressed her for her answer, she said, with tears "I am afraid that my husband's only happiness will be in this life. I have prayed for him and sought in vain to bring him to a better mind, but my fear is that when this life is over, there will be no more happiness for him, so I mean to make him as happy as he can be in his present condition."

It seems to me that God sometimes acts upon that plan, for He gives to some men more than heart can wish—their eyes stand out with fatness and He multiplies to them all earthly blessings because He is a God who would make men as happy as they can be. So He will let them have happiness here, for, in the eternity to come, it will not be possible for His Justice to deal out anything to them but those sorrows which are the inevitable consequence of perseverance in sin!

Even in this first part of my theme there seems to me to be much that ought to touch many hearts. But when I come to *the higher sense of the term, "love,"* and speak of God's own chosen people to whom He can, with emphasis, say, "I have loved you," oh, how sad it is that the Lord has to often say this to them while they are in their unregenerate state! He has chosen them unto eternal life. He has written their names in the Lamb's Book of Life. His well-beloved Son has already bought them with His precious blood, yet look at them—slaves to lust, rioting in sin, or merely hearers of the Word, but not doers of it, still rejecting the Savior and continually going from bad to worse. Oh, could someone only echo in their ears this little message of God, "I have loved you," could they—would they—remain as they are, without the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, or any desire to be drawn towards Him? God knows all about His eternal love towards them and the choice that He has made of them. And often must He say, as He beholds their heart of stone, brow of brass and neck of steel, "Yes, I have loved you, O you poor foolish creatures. And you shall yet be Mine and shall sing among the angels, though now you are rioting in sin and reveling in iniquity!" I think I hear the Lord thus graciously expressing the inmost feelings of His heart and the very repetition of the message ought to touch all our hearts.

But, further, think how the Lord must express Himself, in a similar style, concerning wandering backsliders. There are some whom we have every reason to regard as His people. In times past they have given abundant evidence that they were His, but they have grown spiritually cold, as if a death-chill had struck them in their heart. They have, apparently, gone back to the world and they are now far off from the place where they used to be. But the Lord looks upon them in their wretchedness and sin and He says to them, "I have loved you. You may be trying to live without prayer, but I have loved you. You may have ceased to frequent the House of God, but I have loved you. I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the

wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord, for I am married to you." "The Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away." He has not sued for a divorce from His unfaithful spouse, as He might well have done. "Only acknowledge your iniquity," He says, "confess that you have transgressed against the Lord your God, and you shall be fully and freely forgiven, for I have loved you."

I pray that my blessed Master may Himself speak to any poor backslider who is here, for, surely, His gentle, gracious accents ought to melt even a heart of stone! If you were ever really His, however far you may have wandered from Him, do not hesitate to come back to Him, for He still says to you, "I have loved you." Yes, dear Friends, whenever any of the Lord's people get into a sad, lean, low condition—when they begin to grow cold and to doubt whether they can be the children of God at all—it is well for them to hear the great Father say to them, again and again, "I have loved you. I have loved you. I have loved you. I, who made the heavens and the earth, have loved you. I have loved you from before the foundation of the world. I have not merely pitied you as a man might pity a starving dog, but I have loved you with all My heart. I have loved many others beside you, but, still, I have as much love for you as if there were nobody else for Me to love in all the world." Surely God will cause this simple but most comforting Truth to come home to the hearts of His people and then they will cry, "We will arise and go to our Father, and confess our wanderings and our sins, that we may once more be at peace with Him."

Are you, dear Friend, very sorrowful just now? Have you lost the Light of God's Countenance? Are you sighing and crying for the peace you once enjoyed? Well, then, just do what I have been bidding the sinner do! Come to Christ all over again and, at the same time, make diligent enquiry to find out whether there is any wrong thing in your character that is bringing you into this state of misery. How long is it since you have thoroughly swept out the secret chambers of your heart? If you leave a room unswept for a little while, you know how the cobwebs and the dust gather and settle all over it. Look even at the snow after it has been lying for a day or two in such a foggy, smoky, grimy city as this—it is positively black! Well, if the snow gets black in this smoke, do you not think that your soul will also get foul and dirty? This world is a bad place to live in. To maintain a high condition of purity, you will need a deal of Divine Grace, or you certainly will not do it. Ah, me, how little there is around us that can help us toward God—and how much there is to draw us away from Him! Now, because of all this impurity by which you are surrounded, your soul needs to be constantly swept out. You had need cry to the Holy Spirit to light the candle and frequently sweep out the room,

for unless there is a constant cleansing, there will be continual filth and the heart will never be fit for Christ to come into it and to abide in it. So much, then, concerning the lamentation of love.

II. Now, in the second place, I have to speak upon THE INSENSIBILITY OF INGRATITUDE.

That is a very cruel answer in our text—can you detect the heartless ingratitude in it? I am afraid I do not know how to pronounce the words aright so as to bring out all the evil that is in them. First, you hear God saying, in very plaintive tones, “I have loved you.” And then, instead of that declaration touching the hearts of those who had wandered from Him, and causing them to ask for mercy at His hands, you get this wicked question, “In what way have You loved us?” That is all the reply they give! It is short and sharp, full of unbelief, pride, and rebellion—“In what way have You loved us?” Does anybody really ask that question of God nowadays? Oh, yes! I have heard it many times.

That question is sometimes asked by *men who are loaded with temporal mercies*. There is nothing that God has denied to them. When they were younger, if anybody had told them that they would be worth as much as they now actually possess, they would have said that it was beyond their utmost expectations. Yet now that they have all that their heart can desire and their eyes stand out with fatness, they put to God this shameful question, “In what way have You loved us?” They say that they cannot see any sign of the goodness of God in their prosperity—they trace all their riches and their increase to their own wit, wisdom, industry and perseverance—they leave God out of the matter altogether! And so, although His mercies stare them in the face and they wear the tokens of those mercies on their backs, and carry them within their physical frame, yet they continue to say to Him, “In what way have You loved us?”

I have known others who have practically said the same thing *by the way in which they have slighted Gospel privileges*—a man of this stamp, who has been a Hearer of the Gospel for, perhaps, 20 or 30 years, yet says—“I do not see any proofs of any particular favor that God has shown to me.” O Sir, if you had been cast into Hell, you would have learned to prize the privilege of listening to the Gospel when you had lost it forever! If you had been, for even a little while, in a lunatic asylum, you might, when you come out, begin rightly to value the blessing of restored reason with which you are able to understand at least something of that Gospel which you have so long neglected and despised! It is strange that there should be people living on praying ground and on pleading terms with God, with Heaven to be had for the asking, who yet say to the Lord, “In what way have You loved us?” Ah, Sirs, some of you see what kings and Prophets desired to see, but died without the sight, yet you say to God, “In what way have You loved us?” How happy ought to be your ears

that hear the Gospel's joyful sound, yet, as you hear it not in your hearts, you cry to the Lord, "In what way have You loved us?"

Yes, and I have heard this question put very bitterly *by some who have murmured at their temporal trials*. "How has God been gracious to us?" they ask. "Look at me," says one, "I am very poor. I work as hard as any slave, yet I get but little return for all my toil, and my lot is a truly pitiable one. In what respects has God loved me?" "Look," says another, "at this broken leg." Or perhaps the lament is, "I was born deformed." Or, "I lost an eye early in life! Don't talk to me about God loving me." Yet there are many, now in Heaven, who might never have gone there if it had not been for their poverty, their infirmity and their pain. Often, when God is hedging up a man's way with thorns to stop him from going to destruction, he thinks that the Lord is unkind to him, whereas the thorns in the way are the surest tokens of Divine Love to him! Yes, Sir, you were once able to drink greedily from the muddy stream of worldly pleasure and you kept at it as long as you could. I do not know where you might have been by this time had not God struck you down, taken away your power of enjoyment and deprived you of the means by which you indulged yourself in sin! What better service could He have rendered to you? The silly, self-willed child will not thank his father for the rod, but when he becomes a man, if that rod has been really useful to him, he will respect and love the wise and kind father who did not spare him for all his crying! And you, dear Friend, who are in trouble and sorrow, say that God is dealing harshly with you—yet those trials are all sent in love. That sharp affliction of yours is the surgeon's knife that is cutting away the proud flesh and deadly cancers which, otherwise, would destroy you! God is working for your good in all that He is doing—it is His love that is doing it all.

I am sorry to say that I have known some who appeared to be the Lord's people, who have said to Him, "In what way have You loved us?" because they have become very doubting. They have not looked at eternal things—they have kept looking at their outward inconveniences and sorrows. The poor man has said, "With this leaky roof to my cottage, can God really love me?" And the poor woman has said, "With this rheumatism in my aching bones and my poor little children half clad and ill fed, can God really love me?" And even the heirs of Heaven have sometimes asked of God, "In what way have You loved us?" But when they have come back to their right mind and have rightly understood the ways of the Lord, they have blessed Him for their troubles as much as for their joys—and they have seen how all things work together for good to them that love God!

It shows how wrong is the state of our heart if we can live in the midst of God's continued mercies and yet cannot realize that He loves us. If any of you cannot see any tokens of the benevolence and goodness of God to

you, surely you must be blind! And if, dear child of God, you fail to perceive what the Lord has done for you, anoint your eyes with eye-salve that you may see, for He has done everything for you! He has given you this world and worlds to come. Yes, and He has given Himself to you, to be your Father. He has given you His Son, to be your Savior. He has given you His Spirit, to be your constant Comforter. What more can He do for you than He has done, you who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before you in the Gospel? Therefore, never let this thought flit across your soul and never let this question pass the door of your lips, "In what way have You loved us?"

Thus have I spoken upon the insensibility of ingratitude as well as the lamentation of love.

III. Now, lastly, I have to speak, for just a few minutes, upon THE DISCOVERIES OF GRACE. I am hoping and praying that these last words which I am about to utter, may come true in the experience of a great many in this place, as well as of others who will read the discourse when it is printed.

Suppose you should be converted—become a child of God, and be saved—the first thing you will discover will be *that God has loved you*. What a change that will make in all your feelings towards Him! You will never again say to the Lord, "In what way have You loved me?" But, if you feel as I did when I first found out the love of God to me, you will begin tracing your whole history, from your cradle up to the moment of your conversion—and you will say, "I can see the Lord's loving hand there, and there, and there, and there, and there." You will look upon your trials, your losses, your crosses, your removals from one village or town to another and you will say, "Ah, it was love that watched over me all the while! It was love that was arranging all that happened for my good." And you will be amazed at the difference that feeling will make in your life! Before you knew the Lord, you could not realize His love, but, as soon as ever you really know Him, you will say, "All His dealings with me have been proofs of His love." You will put up your hands in wonder and say, "How could I have been such a mad fool as to go on sinning against God in spite of such wondrous love? It really seems to me as if the more I sinned, the more He loved me—and the worse I was to Him, the better He was to me. Over against my black sins He set the whiteness and brightness of His Grace and He seemed as if He conquered me, not by the sheer force of His might, but by the superior power of His boundless love."

Further, if you shall be converted, it will not be long before you will find out that in addition to God being loving and kind to you in His Providence, *He so loved you that He gave His only-begotten Son to die for you*. The general Truth of God that Christ died for sinners is unspeakably precious—but the sweetest Truth in all the world is for any of us to be

able to say, "He died for me." O my dear Hearer, if you were ever to find out that Christ thought of you in His last moments upon the Cross—that He distinctly and personally poured out His life for you and that your name—I mean your very own name—is engraved upon the palms of His hands and that you, in your own person, are continually before Him, surely that would be a heart-breaker for you! All the Law and the terrors in the world might only harden you in your rebellion, but one glance of the dear languid eyes of Him who hung upon the Cross—one gracious look of His—will make your spirit flow like the streams of water that ran out of the Rock in the wilderness! May the Lord, in His mercy, enable each one of you to say, "He loved me and gave Himself for me," for then you will soon be at His feet as weeping, yet rejoicing penitents!

Again, if you are really converted, so that you come to know the love of God, and the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, another thing which you will soon find out will be *God's election of you from eternity*. How well I recollect when first that ray of light struck into my soul, as I seemed to hear Him say to me personally, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." That great Truth was revealed to me in this way. I said to myself, "Here am I converted, pardoned, saved. There are my school-fellows, the boys and young men with whom I used to be associated—they are not saved. Who has made the difference between us?" I dared not say that I had, and so put the crown of salvation on my own head. I saw, in a single moment, that God must have made the distinction if I was, in any degree whatever, different from my fellow creatures. Then I said to myself, "If God has made this difference in me and done more for me than He has done for others, there must always have been in His heart thoughts of love towards my soul, since He never changes. What He does today is the result of the purpose which was in His heart from before the foundation of the world." So there rolled into my heart, like a stream of honey, the assurance that He had loved me, with complacency, long before the earth was formed, or the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round! Then I said to myself, "O you fool of fools, that you should ever have treated your God as you have done! Are you, indeed, one of His elect and chosen people and yet have you lived all these years without hardly a thought of Him who has loved you from eternity?" I blamed myself, as I still do, that I was so slow to recognize His eternal choice of me. And if the Lord shall be pleased to say to you, in the words of my text, "I have loved you"—when you once really know His love to you, His redemption of you and His election of you, personally, you will no more say, "In what way have You loved me?" But you will bow, in speechless but grateful reverence, at His dear feet, worshipping and adoring the greatness of His Infinite Love!

I do not know how you feel, Brothers and Sisters, who know the Lord, but I feel that if I could live a thousand lives, I would like to live them all

for Christ—and I would even then feel that they were all too little a return for His great love to me. And if any of us could have Grace and strength enough given to us to die a thousand deaths for Christ, He well deserves them for having loved us as He has done.

There are just two things that I want to say to you, and with them I will finish my discourse.

First, some of you are still living in sin. Perhaps you hardly know why you came to the Tabernacle tonight. Possibly it was only out of curiosity. I am no thought-reader or mind-reader, but I can imagine that some of you have been in the habit of pooh-poohing all religion—ridiculing it—and you have done so for a long while. Now, suppose that one of these days you should preach the very faith which now you despise, just as the Apostle Paul did? Do not utter more words than you can help in reply to this suggestion of mine, for you will have to eat them, however many there are of them! Do not go any further in the wrong road than you can help, because you will have to come all that way back. I dare to tell you, in my Master's name, that some of you who hate Him, will love Him before long—though now you oppose Him all you can, by-and-by you will be among the first to vindicate His cause! My Lord knows all about you and as He has bought you with His precious blood, do you think He will not claim you as His own? He has written your name in His Book of Life, so the devil, himself, and all his legions cannot take from you the everlasting life to which His predestinating Grace has ordained you! You shall yet bow down before Him. The day draws near when you who now talk in a hectoring fashion, will be found lying at His feet as suppliants! Then, when He has drawn you to Himself, and has favored you with much of His love—when one of these Sabbath nights you shall be found sitting at His Table and the spikenard shall give forth a sweet smell, and your very soul shall seem to be carried away to Heaven because of the Presence of your Beloved, I wonder what you will think of yourself then?

Suppose He were then to whisper in your ear—I know He will not do so—but suppose He were to remind you of all your ill behavior towards Him—He will not do so, because He gives liberally and upbraids not—but suppose your own memory should be your accuser and should say to you, “Remember that you were a bond slave in the land of Egypt. Recollect those black sins that came out of your heart, those foul words that issued from your lips”—do you not think that as you look up into the face of Jesus, your Lord and Master, you will say, “Ah, my gracious Savior, I have thought of a fresh reason for loving You. I knew it before, but it has come home to me more vividly now, than ever—should not they love most who have had most forgiven? That is my case, my Lord. Therefore, bind me to Yourself and let me never again wander away from You, but let me love You even to the end.”

And lastly, dear Friends, I wonder what we shall think of ourselves when we get away from communion with the saints on earth and sit up yonder with our Savior in Heaven? There is one who was once a drunk—what a strange thing it will be for him to find himself in Heaven! Here he was stuttering and stammering and could not speak plainly because of his drunkenness, but he has been washed and cleansed in the blood of Jesus—and there he is, singing more sweetly, even, than the angels! Would you believe it? That very man up there—that bright spirit robed in white, who sings the loudest of them all, used to curse and swear and ill-treat his wife because she went to the House of God—yet there he is, purified and glorified! See what Sovereign Grace can do? But what must he think of himself when he gets up there? I was trying to imagine what must be the emotion of such a man as Paul, who had been a persecutor and injurious, when he looks into the face of his dear Lord and Master, and casts his crown before Him, and yet all the while thinks, “But I persecuted Him!”

I wonder whether that man is there who pierced His side and those soldiers who nailed Him to the tree? Certainly, he is there who railed at Him on the Cross and then repented and was forgiven! And he is there who said, “I know not the Man.” When they are singing, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing,” I think that, sometimes, Peter pauses a while—and those around wonder why Peter has left off singing, but he cannot help it. Emotions of unutterable gratitude are coming over him as he remembers that he has been forgiven through the wondrous Grace of Christ who loved him even when He was being denied by him with oaths and curses!

I wish that I could communicate to you the emotions of my own spirit as I think of the greatness of man's sin and set it side by side with the greatness of God's Grace—as I think of unspeakable love and of unutterably vile sin which that love puts away. Come, dear Friends, and let us all join together to bless and magnify the wondrous love which God has revealed to us in His Word—and may we all meet in Heaven, to the praise of the glory of His Grace, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—561, 579, 735.

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

THE MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT

NO. 470

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 7, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The Messenger of the Covenant, whom you delight in.”
Malachi 3:1.

The Lord’s people delight in the Everlasting Covenant itself. It is an un-failing source of consolation to them so often as the Holy Spirit leads them to its green pastures and makes them to lie down beside its still waters. They can sweetly sing of it from youth even to hoar hairs, from childhood even to the tomb, for this theme is inexhaustible—

*“Your Covenant the last accent claims
Of this poor faltering tongue;
And that shall the first notes employ
Of my celestial song.”*

They delight to contemplate *the antiquity* of that Covenant, remembering that before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round, the interests of the saints were made secure in Christ Jesus. It is peculiarly pleasing to them to remember *the sureness* of the Covenant. They love to meditate upon “the sure mercies of David.” They delight to celebrate the Covenant in their songs of praise, as “signed and sealed and ratified, in all things ordered well.”

It often makes their hearts dilate with joy to think of its *immutability*, as a Covenant which neither time nor eternity, life nor death, things present, nor things to come, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, shall ever be able to violate—a Covenant as old as eternity and as everlasting as the Rock of Ages. They rejoice also to feast upon *the fullness* of this Covenant, for they see in it all things provided for them. God is their portion, Christ their companion, the Spirit their comforter, earth their lodge and Heaven their home.

They see in it not only some things but all things. Not only a help to obtain some desirable possessions but an inheritance reserved and entailed to every soul that has an interest in this ancient and eternal deed of gift. Their eyes sparkled when they saw it as a treasure-trove in the Bible. But O how their souls were gladdened when they saw in the last will and testament of their Divine kinsman that it was bequeathed to them! More especially it is the pleasure of God’s people to contemplate *the graciousness* of this Covenant.

They see that the Law was made void because it was a Covenant of Works and depended upon merit, but this they perceive to be enduring because Divine Grace is the basis, Divine Grace the condition, Divine Grace the strain, Divine Grace the bulwark, Divine Grace the foundation, Divine Grace the top stone.

From the beginning even to the end, it is all of Grace. They see that the Covenant runs on this wise, not, “I will if you will,” but, “I will and you shall.” Not, “I will reward if you deserve,” but, “I will forgive even if you sin.” Not, “I will cleanse if you are clean,” but, “I will cleanse if you are filthy,” not, “I will keep if you assist,” but, “I will bring you back even if you are lost, I will surely save you and preserve you even to the end.”

I know some Christians—bleary-eyed, like Leah—who cannot see afar off, and hence the councils of eternity they cannot behold. I know some Believers of weak knees and feeble joints who are afraid of that strong word, “Covenant.” But they that are men in Christ Jesus, who by reason of years have had their senses exercised, know that the Covenant is a treasury of wealth, a granary of food, a fountain of life, a storehouse of salvation, a charter of peace and a haven of joy. The Everlasting Covenant! Let my soul but anchor here, then howl, winds and roar, hurricanes! I will not fear.

The Everlasting Covenant! Let my soul but cast its anchor here and come life with all its tribulations, and death with all its pains and terrors, my soul laughs them all to scorn—

***“The Gospel bears my spirit up;
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation for my hope,
In oaths and promises and blood.”***

We advance a step further towards our text and remark that the “Messenger of the Covenant” is a welcome ambassador to those who are interested in those exceedingly great and precious promises which pertain to life and godliness. But, waiving further preface, let us notice, first, *that we delight in the office of Christ as the Messenger of the Covenant.* Next, *that we delight in the way in which He fulfils that office.* And then, we shall conclude by noticing *some ways in which we show our delight.*

I. First, then, WE DELIGHT IN CHRIST IN HIS OFFICE OF MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT.

What is that office? I shall need two or three words to explain it. When we read of Christ as Messenger of the Covenant, I think we may understand Him to be a *Covenanted Messenger*. Now, God has sent many messengers, whose words, when they have been spoken in His name, He has not suffered to fall to the ground. So far they were covenanted messengers. But these persons sometimes spoke of themselves, and then God

had not bound Himself by promise to keep their words. Sometimes, even like the Apostle Paul, they would have to pause and say, “I think I have the Spirit of God,” but they might not be certain.

But Christ is a Covenanted Messenger. God has sworn to Him to do for us whatever He may promise to us, so that if we believe in God we may believe also in Him, since He speaks for God, and His every word is settled in Heaven —

**“Arrayed in mortal flesh
He like an angel stands,
And holds the promises
And pardons in His hands—
Commissioned from His Father’s Throne
To make His Grace to mortals known.”**

Again, He is the Covenanted Messenger—on our behalf Christ swore to God to carry out that part of the Covenant which was left for man, and so He stood as a Covenanted Messenger between God and man. The word “plenipotentiary” just hits my thought. You know sometimes kings send out ambassadors to try and negotiate peace but they have limited powers. On other occasions ambassadors are sent with unlimited, unrestricted power, to make peace or not, and to make it just as they will.

Now Christ comes as the Covenanted Ambassador of God, as the Plenipotentiary of Heaven. Let Him do what He will, God is with Him. Let Him promise what He may, God ratifies it. Let Him speak what He will to our souls, His word shall certainly be fulfilled. Now do you not rejoice in Christ in this office? He has said to us, “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” “Rest,” says the eternal Father, as He confirms Jesus’ word. “Go in peace, your sins which are many are forgiven you.” “They *are* forgiven you,” says the court of Heaven, “go in peace.” “He that believes on Me is not condemned,” says Christ. And the Father says Himself, “He is not condemned.”

There is not a word of the Gospel which the Father has left unsanctioned. You need not, therefore, when you venture upon Christ’s word and Christ’s merit, think you are resting on something which God will not accept. He is God’s Covenanted Messenger. He is sworn to accept whom Christ accepts and since Christ saves all that trust in Him, the Father accepts them likewise. He will certainly save all whom Christ has declared shall be saved.

This, however, does not exhaust the meaning. Christ is the Messenger of the Covenant, in the next place, *as the messenger of the Father to us*. Moses was messenger of the Covenant of Works and his face shone, for the ministration of death was glorious. But Christ is the messenger of the Covenant of Grace. O let His face shine in your esteem, you saints of the Lord, for the ministration of life must be more glorious, far! Christ comes

to us to tell us all that God will tell. The revelation of God is Christ. If you would know God, he that has seen Christ has seen the Father. God's *Word* is Jesus, He speaks fully by Him.

Would you know the Father's decree? "I will declare the decree," says Christ. Would you know His Character? See every attribute of God in the Man, Christ. Would you know His designs? See the designs of God effected in the works of Jesus. Would you know in fact all that is knowable of God? Understand that you can see it, not in nature, nor in Providence but in Jesus—

***"God in the Person of His Son,
Has all His mightiest works outdone."***

And will you not delight in Him as such—as God's Messenger to you? If the very ministers of Christ are delightful to you, if their feet are beautiful upon the tops of the mountains when they bring glad tidings, how much more beautiful is He who comes from God to man, with messages of peace, declaring to us that God is reconciled to us and accepts us in the Beloved? Sing His praises, O you that have heard His voice. Glory in His holy name, O you that have received His report, unto whom the arm of the Lord has been revealed, for as God's Messenger to you, you should delight in Him.

But then, He is, as the Messenger of the Covenant, *our Messenger and Mediator with the Father*. You want to tell your Father something—Jesus stands to carry the message for you. George Herbert, in one of his poems, pictures Christ as using the hole in his side as a bag to carry our letters to Glory—

***"If you have anything to send or write,
(I have no bag but here is room)
Unto My father's hands and sight
(Believe Me) it shall safely come.
That I shall mind, what you impart;
Look, you may put it very near My heart."***

In the wounds of Christ we put our messages to God and they go up to Heaven with something more added to them. The blots and blurs of our petition Christ wipes out, and then He savors our prayers and incenses them by putting with them the costly mixture of His own precious righteousness.

Look! In His golden censer yonder smokes the incense of your prayers, accepted for the sake of the incense and for the sake of Him who swings it to and fro as it smokes before the Most High. "The Messenger of the Covenant." This name is peculiar to our Lord. Let not any man arrogate this office to himself, for it is Christ's, alone. God never did hear a message from man that He accepted, except through this Messenger. I cannot get to God

directly, I must have a Mediator. Well said Luther, “I will have nothing to do with an absolute God. For our God is a consuming fire.”

No sigh ever reached the Most High, except through Christ—I mean so as to move His heart to pour out His Grace. Prayers, groans, tears—all these are like arrows without a bow—till Christ comes and fits them to the string and shoots them home for you and me. All our prayers are like a victim, with the wood and altar—Christ must bring the fire and then the sacrifice smokes to Heaven. He is the Messenger. Oh Christian, do you not rejoice in Him, then as the Messenger of the Covenant? He is doing your errands before the Throne tonight, pleading for me, pleading for you. “I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.”

You came to this house tonight, you offered prayer, Christ is offering it now, as an offering most Divinely sweet. As you are sitting here, you are breathing a vow, or a desire to Heaven. Christ presents it, for He stands at the golden altar, having a censer full of the prayer and vows of saints. Give Him an errand now. Try Him at this moment, entreat Him to plead on your behalf. Thus view Him. Thus exercise your faith upon Him as the Plenipotentiary from God to man, as the Revealer of God to man and as Spokesman from man to God—

***“Look up, my Soul, with cheerful eye,
See where the great Redeemer stands—
The glorious Advocate on high,
With precious incense in His hands!
He sweetens every humble groan,
He recommends each broken prayer;
Recline your hope on Him alone,
Whose power and love forbid despair.”***

II. But briefly on the second point. WE DELIGHT IN THE WAY IN WHICH CHRIST HAS CARRIED OUT THIS OFFICE AS MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT.

And here let us dwell on that part of the office which relates to *the revelation of God to man*. Oh, what a full Messenger has He been! He has not dropped half the message. He has not told us a *part* of God but all that His heavenly Father bade Him declare, He has revealed unto us as we could bear it. And He has given us this day the Holy Spirit who leads us into all the Truths of God, who shall take of the things of Christ which the Father gave Him and reveal them unto us. What a full Messenger and how faithful! Surely the Master could say, “I have kept back nothing that is profitable for you.”

With greater emphasis than ever Paul could say it, He might have declared, “I am clear from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” We poor messengers mar the Master’s message in the telling of it but, “Never man spoke like this Man.”

So full and faithful is He who speaks with Jehovah's bidding to His chosen people, that He can say, "All things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you."

Then, *how willingly He does it!* "I delight to do Your will, O God." How sweet it seemed to Him to show God to us! Even His tears, though bitterly they flowed, were cheerfully bestowed. And His very death, though it was an awful Baptism, yet was one for which He longed. How was He straitened until it was accomplished! I hate a man to be a messenger who goes unwillingly and who mumbles out the message as if he had no interest in it. But oh, our sweet Lord Jesus tells God's message to us as though He were more interested in it than we were. He tells it so lovingly, so affectionately, so tenderly, with all His heart, turning His soul out that we may see it, writing His very nature out in streams of blood, that we might see in crimson lines what otherwise we might not have been able to perceive.

Oh, how much better than ministers, better than Prophets, better than Apostles, better than angels, Christ has performed the office of Messenger from God. Solomon's Proverb is all outdone in our Redeemer's case. "As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refreshes the soul of his masters."

Beloved, let us delight equally as much in *the way in which He has performed our message from ourselves to God*. Ah, I have been to my Advocate a thousand times but I never found Him a weary Messenger. You have a servant and you give him many things to do. But towards nightfall it may be that you give him one thing too many and the poor man's weary feet and languid looks chide you when you give him the errand. But I have been to my Master and so have you, in the dead of night and I never found Him asleep. I have been to Him in the heat of summer but I never found Him point to His bloody sweat and say He could not go.

I have been to Him a thousand times and yet I have never, never heard Him say, "I have served you enough, I will not be your Messenger again." But cheerfully, willingly, has He taken our request to God, again and again and again and presented it there. And how full of sweet powers of memory and generous recollections He has been! We have often failed to tell Him the message aright, and sometimes there was a part of it that we could not tell him—groaning that could not be uttered—but He read the message and then told it perfectly out in the other place, within the veil, never forgetting one desire nor one faint wish. Sometimes erasing one that was evil and putting in another that was right—but He has never forgotten us.

The blessed Master has a thousand souls to plead for—no, what if I say millions! But never has He forgotten one. The meanest lamb in His flock He has tended. The poorest subject in His dominions has been the object

of His advocacy. And then, Brethren, with what passionate love has He pleaded for us in Heaven! Oh, you cannot conceive Him, for He is high above us. But if we could see Him tonight, standing before the Throne, we would say, "I never thought I had such an Advocate as this!" Not with sighs and tears, for they are over now, but with authority He pleads, points to His wounded hands and to His side and urges the case of His people as though it were His own case and so indeed, it is, for He may well say—

***"I feel at My heart all your sighs and your groans,
For you are most near Me—My flesh and My bones."***

Never such an Advocate as this! Fathers might plead for sons and a wife might throw herself on the ground to plead with a judge for her husband, but never such a Pleader as this! You Messenger of the Covenant, none can plead as You do!

And then, dear Friends, I think we ought to delight in Him, when we think how unflaggingly He perseveres in His intercession, though we are continually forgetful and ungrateful for His kindness. I am sure if we had a friend's cause to plead and he were as unworthy and forgetful as we are, we should tell him to suit himself and find some other advocate. But He, for Zion's sake, does not hold His peace. For Jerusalem's sake He does not rest. Going to and fro from Heaven to earth, from earth to Heaven, He speaks messages of love from God to our souls, bearing messages of pleading and of intercession from our souls to God. Take, Beloved, a sweet delight in Jesus, for He does His errand well. He is a choice Messenger, one among a thousand, yes, the chief among ten thousand.

III. But time flies, and therefore we hasten onward to carry out our third proposal. HOW ARE WE TO SHOW THAT WE DO REALLY DELIGHT IN CHRIST? Well, there is one way of doing it, and that is by again *employing Him tonight*. You have been upon my errands so many times, my sweet Lord, that You shall even go again. I ask you, Brothers and Sisters, to let me speak to you a moment. I know you have some very heavy matters on your mind tonight, some very heavy trial awaits you tomorrow and you have been troubled about it all the week.

Do you delight in the Messenger of the Covenant? Ah, then send your Jesus with it as a message to the Throne tonight. Say to Jesus, "I pray You tell the Father that one of His adopted who can say, 'Abba,' is in deep and sore trouble. Send You from Heaven and deliver me and pluck me out of the deep waters." You will show your delight in Him by trusting Him in your great matters. Oh, but you mean to do it yourself? You have all your wits about you and mean to get through it yourself, do you? You shall flounder in the mire. But give the matter up to *Him* and let Him take it to

your God, and see whether prayer does not more often prevail in trial than all the energies and wits of man.

And Sister over yonder, you have a secret, one you would not tell to me, no, nor to your dearest friend, but it rankles and it makes your heart bleed in secret till sometimes you are weary of your life. Do you love the Messenger of the Covenant? Whisper into His ear what you can tell to none beside and ask Him to speak for you to the King, to the Captain of the Host. Say unto Him, “Jesus, lover of my soul, I’ll trust You with this most secret grief. That which no creature can meddle with, You shall know. Behold I bare the wound before Your tender eyes. Go, tell the Father that a child of His is weeping in secret, walking in darkness and seeing no light.”

You will show your delight in Him by trusting Him now. Minister, send a messenger by Him tonight for your flock! Sunday school teacher, give Him a missive from your heart for your class! Mother, the Messenger waits for you, ask Him to plead for your sons and daughters! Father, the Messenger is ready to bear your wish to Heaven! Tell Him you would have no greater joy than this, to see your children walk in the Truth of God!

Jesus, say to Your Father that *my* prayer tonight is that I would have this congregation saved. Oh speak, my Master! Bear the ponderous message! Ask that not one within these walls may perish. Lift up Your hands and plead for every man, woman, and child beneath this tabernacle’s dome tonight, and ask that everyone may be a partaker of the Divine Grace that saves. I know that You will prevail if You will ask, for if You should ask anything of Your Father, He will do it for You. You have but to will it and it is done. Behold, by faith I would lay hold upon the skirt of Your garment, You great High Priest, the sweetly sounding bells of Your ephod I hear tonight. Upon Your glittering breast-plate the eyes of my faith are fixed. Take that request and plead it solemnly before the awful Throne of Heaven, and let the answer come to all this multitude—an answer of Grace and peace! Thus, my Beloved, we must show our delight in Him—by bidding Him plead for us.

Leaving for a moment the thought of messenger, I want to add some other things, not quite, perhaps, in keeping with our text but quite in harmony with our delight in Jesus. You are coming round the Table, Brothers and Sisters, and you delight in Christ. Shall I tell you how it is that we show that we delight in Him?

One way is by *waiting* for Him. There is the wife at evening. It is past the proper hour for her husband to return. She goes to the window and looks out into the cold dark night, and then she goes back to the chair and to the little one and takes her needle and whiles away the time. But soon she is up again looking out of the window once more and listening to

every foot-step in the street, or looking out from the open door. Why is not her spouse at home? How is it that he is away?

She sits down again, she tries to ease her mind with household business but every ticking of the clock and every striking of the hour suggests to her, "Why is he so long in coming?" Look, she is again drawing back the curtains and looking out into the black night for the hundredth time, longing for her husband, and why? Because she takes delight in him and wants to see his face. So when Christians look out into the dark world and say, "When will He come?" And when they go to their labor and say, "Why are His chariot wheels so long in coming?" And when they can cry with John, "Come quickly, even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus," and are waiting for and hasting unto the coming of the Son of Man, then they prove that they have intense delight in Him.

Do you show this, Christian? Are you waiting for Him? Are you getting ready for the time when the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God?—

***"Come, my Beloved, haste away,
Cut short the hours of Your delay—
Fly like a youthful hart or roe,
Over the hills where spices grow."***

We prove our delight in Him in another way, by working for Him. There is a woman there. She is working hard at her embroidery needle. She is making a little coat. It is a linen ephod. I wonder why that woman smiles so, while she works with her needle? There, she must put it away, for there is other work to do. I wonder why the next day she goes to the drawer, so pleased to get that work out and continue it?

I will tell you her name. Her name is Hannah, the wife of Elkanah and she is making a little coat for her son Samuel, whom she has left with Eli at the Tabernacle. Now you perceive why she is so pleased in making this ephod? Because she delights in Samuel. So I see the Sunday school teacher pleased to meet his children. I see the minister go to the pulpit with beaming eyes and I see the missionary leaving house and home, kindred and cherished associations, joyfully giving up everything for Christ and I ask, why? Because he delights in Christ and therefore he can work for Him. Is it so with you, Friends, are you working for Christ? Yes, methinks you are, or else I fear you are not delighting in Him.

And then another thing. I have seen the boy at school—I knew such a boy myself—and one day that child was at play, and merry was he at his games, but some lad ran across the ground and said, "Your father's come to see you," and he laid aside his playthings and his games and ran at once into his father's arms because he delighted in his parent. And I have seen the Christian when he is delighting in his God, when lecture, or

Prayer Meeting night came, say, "Well, I will gladly lose a little of my business, that I may run into my Father's arms in the hour of worship."

There has been a saint to be visited, or a sinner to be warned, and I have seen the lovers of Jesus leave their nets that they may follow Christ and forsake the world, that they might serve Him. Beloved, if He were to come tonight and bid us choose whether we would be in Heaven or here, I think we would not long delay, but say to Him, "You leave me no choice. To be with You is so much better than anything beside, that I embrace You now. Oh take me up to You!"

Further, we may show our delight in Christ by searching after Him when we lose His Presence. There is the spouse in the Canticles. She is going about in the city in the dark night—"Have you seen Him whom my soul loves?" The watchmen meet her and pluck away her veil rudely and they smite her. Why is not that delicate woman at home at rest? See, she wanders on, cold and weary, with tears rolling down her cheeks and hanging like pearls from her eyes. Why is this woman weeping and searching like that? The answer is—"Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where do You feed?"

She has such a delight in Him, that she will search a thousand nights. Yes, a believing soul would search Hell through to find Christ, if He were to be found nowhere else. And I know what Rutherford said was no great exaggeration, when he said, "If there were fifty Hells between my soul and Christ, and He bade me wade through them and He would come and meet me, I would gladly dash through them all to reach His fond embrace." Jesus, our thirst for You is insatiable. We must have You and thus we prove our delight in You.

Lastly, we may prove our delight in Christ by being very happy, ourselves, and trying to make others partakers of our joy. Do not go to the Lord's Table tonight, if you can help it, burdened with your groans and moans. If you cannot come without bringing them, then come, come anyhow. But I would have you tonight, if you could, delight yourselves in the Lord. You are very poor. Ah, but you are very rich in Him. You are sick, you say. Yes, but remember what He suffered for you. Oh, but you are a sinner. Yes, but remember His precious blood! Fix your eyes on Him tonight and on nothing else, and oh, be glad!

Come to His Table with delight. I often say I know the people that come here—our regular people that come here—because they have a way of walking and a look on the Sunday that is different from most people that go to other places of worship. Other folks are so solemn, as if they were going to an execution. They look so grave, as if it were an awful work to serve God, as bad as going to prison, to attend a service, and as disagreeable as the pillory to stand up and praise the Lord.

But I notice that you come here with joy, looking upon the Sunday as a joyous day, not a time to pull the blinds down and shut out the light, but a day to feast yourselves in God. Now I think ordinance days are especially times of rejoicing. You and I have been all the week up to our elbows in work. By-and-by we shall have to go back to that dingy workroom among those persecuting worldlings. Never mind—Lord make this as a sanctuary to us tonight. Shut us in and shut the world out and let us rejoice ourselves in our God—

***“As myrrh new bleeding from the tree,
Such is dying a Christ to me.
And while He makes my soul His guest,
Your bosom, Lord, shall be my rest.
No beams of cedar, or of fir,
Can with Your courts on earth compare.
And here we wait, until Your love
Raise us to nobler seats above.”***

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, if you have this delight *tell it to others*. Do not be tongue-tied, and dumb, any of you. Speak out what God has done for you. Tell! Tell!—

***“Tell to sinners round,
What a dear Savior you have found.”***

If you should have any enjoyment tonight, let others partake of the honey which you have discovered. God help you thus to live to His praise.

I am about to retire a few moments, while our friends get to their seats for the communion. Before I retire, I have a message to tell from the Messenger of the Covenant. He is willing to take a message from any poor, troubled, sin-burdened, conscience-stricken sinner in this Tabernacle. Has any one of you a message for Him? The Lord Jesus Christ is willing to receive and stamp with His own blood-marked hand any earnest, heart-written message you are willing to send to God tonight.

Is there anyone who has this to send—“God be merciful to me a sinner”? What? Not one of you? Is there not a heart here that would say, “Lord save or I perish”? Surely there are some! Breathe your desire out now silently. Jesus hears it—trust Him to carry it to God. Believe that His blood can cleanse you. Trust Him, trust His merits to clothe you. Trust especially His intercession to prevail for you as the Messenger of the Covenant. Do it, Soul.

“Oh but,” you say, “my hands are black with sin.” Never mind, He will touch them and make them clean. “Oh but I cannot pray.” He can pray for you. “Oh but I cannot plead.” He can plead in your place. Tell Him your wants. As Rowland Hill once did, so would I do with you. It is said that Rowland once had to put up in a village where there was no other house to put up at but a tavern. And having a pair of horses to feed and going

into the best room of the inn, he was considered to be a valuable guest for the night. So the host came in, and he said, "Glad to see you Mr. Hill."

"I am going," was the reply, "to stay with you tonight. Will you let me have family prayer tonight in this house?" "I never had such a thing as family prayer here," said the landlord, "and I don't want to have it now." "Very well, then, just fetch my horses out. I can't stop in a house where they won't pray to God. Take the horses out." Now being too good a guest to lose, the man thinks better of it and promises to have family prayer. "Ah but," said Hill, "I'm not in the habit of conducting prayer in other people's houses. You must conduct it yourself." The man said he could not pray. "But you must," said Rowland Hill. "Oh but I never did pray," the man said.

"Then, my dear man, you will begin tonight," was the answer. The time came and the family were on their knees, "Now," said Rowland Hill, "every man prays in his own house. You must offer prayer tonight." "I can't pray, I *can't*," said the landlord. "What? Man, you have had all these mercies today and are you so ungrateful that you cannot thank God for them? Besides, what a wicked sinner you have been. Can't you tell God what a sinner you've been and ask for pardon?" The man began to cry, "I can't pray, Mr. Hill, I can't, indeed I can't."

"Then tell the Lord, Man, you can tell Him you can't pray," said Mr. Hill, "and ask Him to help you." Down went the poor landlord on his knees. "O Lord I can't pray. I wish I could." "Ah, you have begun to pray," said Rowland Hill, "you have begun to pray and you will never leave off. As soon as God has once set you to pray, faint though it be, you will never leave off. Now I'll pray for you."

And so he did and it was not long before the Lord was pleased, through that strange instrumentality, to break the landlord's hard heart and to bring him to Christ. Now I say, if any of you can't pray, tell the Lord you can't. Ask Him to help you to pray. Ask Him to show you your need to be saved. And if you can't pray, ask Him to give you everything that you need. Christ will *make* as well as *take* the message. He will put His own blood upon your prayer. And the Father will send down the Holy Spirit to you to give you more faith and more trust in Christ. May the Lord send you away with His blessing tonight. Amen.

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THE SITTING OF THE REFINER

NO. 1575

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

***“And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.”
Malachi 3:3.***

THIS is spoken of as one of the results of the coming of the Lord—He would test and try all things, destroy the false and the evil and make those pure whom He permitted to remain. Behold, the Promised One has come! He whom Israel sought suddenly appeared in His Temple as the Messenger of the Covenant. Glad were the eyes of Simeon, Anna and all those who waited for Him—and glad, this day, are our voices as we proclaim that the Messiah has appeared! The glorious Son of God, the Anointed of the Most High has been among men and faithful witnesses have testified concerning Him, “We beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth.”

That coming, heralded by songs of angels and prophetic of countless blessings, should have been a day of unmingled light to men, but because of hypocrisy, pride and self, it was not so. On the contrary, it was to many a day of darkness and not of light. We have abundant historical evidence that our Lord’s first Advent was a day of great trial to the Jewish people and when we remember the siege of Jerusalem and kindred events, we do not marvel that the Prophet asked, “But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like fuller’s soap.”

His ministry tried the religion, the orthodoxy and the saintship of the period—and because it revealed the hollowness of the whole of the profession of the day—it awakened all the enmity of the religious classes. Those who were the leaders of the so-called religious thought of the age were awakened to hate the Lord Jesus and to take a delight in nailing Him to the Cross, for His teaching was so true and good that their word-chopping and ceremony-making could not endure it! Our Lord, when He came, sat as a refiner and assayed the age then present—and ever since then His Gospel in the world, His Spirit, His teaching, yes, the very fact of His life—these all together have been a test, a trial, a sort of standard of weights and measures among men.

All things are on trial. You are constantly hearing of this time and that time as being “crises” and the saying is true. There is always a crisis of something or other during these days of the Lord’s sitting as a refiner. All things are being thrust into the furnace and the fire is kept burning at a white heat—and nothing *evil* can abide the flame. Everything that is good

shall be conserved, purified, made brilliant—but all that is evil, be it what it may, the whole world over—since Christ has come, shall be tried and dissolved as by fire. When our Lord comes the *second* time, the trial will be still more intense. “Who shall abide the day of His coming” when He shall still further be revealed and when His purpose shall be that of *judgment* rather than of mercy?

It is well for us to know that whenever Jesus Christ draws near to a soul He comes in utmost mercy to make it clean. Because He is, in Himself, the Incarnation of ineffable Love, His coming always means that He is about to purify the soul, for the highest mercy is to rid us of sin. The grandest thing that God, Himself, can do in the purpose of His love is to purify us into His own glorious holiness! Christ loved His Church and this is how He showed it—“He gave Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.”

The Well-Beloved seeks to purify His chosen by the washing of water through the Word of God. It is the way His love takes, for true love does always choose the way of holiness. That love which would lead its beloved into sin is lust—it deserves not the *name* of love! But true love will always seek the highest health and wholeness (which is holiness) of its object. Pure affection will grieve to see a fault, mourn over a folly and seek to remove a blot.

Perfect love seeks the perfection of the thing it loves. Such is the perfect love of Christ—whenever He comes to a soul in love He comes as a refiner. He comes with this objective—to take away the dross from the silver and to make the fine gold still purer. In His sharpest dispensations He means no ill to us, but the most good, seeking not to grieve, but to lead us to the eternal blessedness of which the root and flower are both found in absolute perfection. If any of you, my Hearers, are seeking the Lord at this time, I want you to understand what it means—you are seeking a *fire* which will test you and consume much which has been dear to you.

We are not to expect Christ to come and save us *in* our sins! He will come and save us *from* our sins and, therefore, if you are enabled by faith to take Christ as a Savior, remember that you take Him as the Purger and the Purifier, for it is from sin that He saves us. “They shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.” This is the particular salvation which He aims at. Though He does deliver men from Hell, it is by delivering them from the sin which is the fuel of Tophet’s flame. Though He does give us Heaven, yet His way of bringing us to Heaven is by giving us a heavenly mind—a heart obedient to the holy and loving Father.

The refinement of our nature and character is the way in which His infinite love most wisely displays itself. We are going to talk of this purifying process. “He shall sit as a refiner.” How is the refining carried on? It is carried on in part by the Word of God. “Is not My Word like a fire?” Wherever the Gospel is preached thoroughly, out and out, it is a wonderful consumer of dross! I have known certain congregations that have been dead in worldliness—the haunts of wealthy professors whose love to

Christ was a mere pretense. Close to them I have seen another Church which has been lively in spirit and full of zeal for the Lord. What was the difference? The reason has usually been this—that in the one case there was *man's* ministry and in the other there was the Word of the Lord!

Ministries of the Spirit worldly people cannot bear. They are displeased with a plain testimony. It rasps their conscience. There is no need to turn them out of the Church—they drop away of themselves. It is not the place for them; it is too hot for them, I mean too holy, too spiritual, too devout. By-and-by they are offended and murmuring, they prepare to emigrate. There are so many things that they do not approve of—they see so much that is dreadfully orthodox, narrow-minded and bigoted—that they trot off among their own cattle. Yes, and so they should. That is God's way of keeping His flock to itself. Those that are rooted up by the Word of God are best rooted up. We may always be practicing this kind of separating the tares from the wheat, for it leaves the testing with God and a man's own conscience and, therefore, no injustice will be done.

It would be ill by excommunications to seek to root up the tares from among the wheat, lest we root up the wheat with them, but by the Word of God, if it is preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, the process will be always going on. God's furnace stands in Zion. If any of you are ever displeased by the Word, I pray you *are* displeased—we shall certainly never alter the Word for you! If the Truth of God comes too closely home to your consciences and angers you, *be* angry, not only with him that speaks it, but with Him from whom it comes—and then you will see the folly of such anger and humble yourselves before God, accept His Truth—which will live and your sin shall die. God grant it may be so!

Another purging operation is by causing His chosen to have more fellowship with His own blessed and glorious Self. Of all the means of purging the heart, none surpasses this, for when the Lord, in great mercy, draws His child near to Him and makes Him feel His love and know it beyond a doubt, then the favored heart longs to be holy in all things. When the Lord fills His servant full of His love and makes him to be overjoyed with the sweet consciousness that he is the Beloved's and that the Beloved is his, then a holy jealousy burns within the soul and the heart cries, "Is there anything that can grieve the Beloved? Let it be slain! Is there anything that I think, or wish, or say, or do, that might break the sacred spell of communion and cause Him to be gone? Let it be driven out at once!"

The heart institutes a diligent search that, if possible, it may put away the accursed thing so that Christ may not be grieved. Of all fires that ever burned, this is one of the fiercest. Jealousy is cruel as the grave and a holy jealousy does stern work in our hearts with sin! It hangs up the darling sin before the face of the sun and calls upon the fowls of Heaven to come and feast upon the slain! Oh, that we knew Christ better and lived more in the Light of His Countenance, for then we would be purged as with the spirit of burning! After all, the Holy Spirit is the great fire that burns in Zion to purge Believers from the love of sin. It is He that makes

use of the Word, makes use of fellowship and makes use of everything else to sever sin from the saint and take away the dross from the silver. He is the immediate Agent of our sanctification—all else we must regard as only the means in His skillful hands. To Him be our love and our praise evermore!

As a subsidiary means the Lord uses Providence. I have no doubt that He very frequently uses gracious Providences, as we call them—that is, Providences which please us by gratifying our natural wishes. Some people have been sanctified by prosperity, but I do not think very many have. Few good medicines are pleasant to the palate. If we were as we ought to be, every joy that comes to us would tend to make us grateful and so it would make us love God—and what is that but to be more like God and more holy? But, alas, in that we are weak through the flesh, the gentler modes of Love more often fail than her rougher processes. It remains then, that if we cannot be preserved in honey, we must be salted with fire lest corruption should take hold upon us.

Such is the stubbornness of our flesh, that the Lord uses for fuel in His furnace sharp and heavy trials of different kinds. Adversity assumes many forms and in each and all of its shapes the Lord knows how to use it for His people's benefit. Christ sits as a Refiner when He takes away prosperity and brings the wealthy down to poverty. He often refines men by the losses which they sustain of beloved friends. Bereavement burns like a furnace blast and, oh, how much of carnal love has been consumed by it! We have known persons greatly purified by the Holy Spirit by passing through depression of spirit, inward grief and soul sorrow. Spiritual pain has been blessed to some and physical pain to more.

In itself, pain will sanctify no man—it may even tend to wrap him up within himself and make him morose, peevish, selfish. But when God blesses it, then it will have a most salutary effect—a softening influence. Sorrow is made to act as a kind of flux upon the hard metal to make the dross separate from the precious ore. Yes, affliction is what most Believers think of when they read such a passage as this, but I warn them not to think too much of it, for that is not the Refiner's only fire, nor is it even His best fire. Affliction is but one part of the machinery of the Royal Refinery—one of the fluxes by which the great Lord separates the precious from the vile.

I desire to call your attention to the text by leading you to mark three things. First, I want you to watch the attitude of the Refiner. "And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." Secondly, the object of His refining—"He shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver." And, thirdly, the result of the refinement, "That they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."

I. Notice carefully THE ATTITUDE OF THE REFINER—"He shall sit." The posture would not have been mentioned had it not been instructive. Sitting looks like the attitude of *indifference*. There is the metal vexed with a white heat—here is the Refiner sitting down! There is the child of God upon the bed of pain and he cries, "My Lord, come and help me!" And

there the Refiner *sits*—He looks on, but does not stir a hand. The child of God is sinking in trouble. He fears, like Peter, that the next step may drown him and there is his Lord, calm and unmoved! When the Apostolic ship was out at sea and tossed in the tempest, Christ was asleep in the back part of the vessel! Unbelief dares challenge His love because of this apparent apathy—how can He sit still and see us suffer?

She mutters—“He is indifferent! He does not care.” “Don’t You care that we perish?” is the cry of Unbelief and before the heart actually utters it, it begins to think, “Where is the tenderness of Christ? Where is the gentleness of God? Am I thus to be tortured? Am I thus to be tried? Am I thus to be tossed from billow to billow without a Helper?” Yet after all our crying and tears the Refiner still sits! Yes, He, to all appearances, disregards our prayers and entreaties and fulfils the description of the text—“He sits.” It is amazing how often God seems utterly indifferent to His people and how Christ, filled with compassion because He has been tried in all points like as we are, yet seems to look down upon our sorrows with undisturbed serenity.

I once heard a Welshman preach in his own native tongue. It was a sermon in which he got into the spirit of his subject and spoke as one Inspired. He used a very simple illustration when he said, “The mother has her dear babe upon her knee. It is time for washing. She washes its face. The little one cries. It loves not the soap; it loves not the water and therefore it cries. Here is a great sorrow! Listen to its lamentations! It is ready to break its heart! What does the mother do? Is she sorrowful? Does she weep? No! She is singing all the while because she understands how good it is that the child should suffer a little temporary inconvenience in order that its face, all smeared and foul, should become bright and beautiful again! Thus does the great Father rest in His love and rejoice over us with singing while we are sighing and crying.”

Ours is but a child’s sorrow, sharp and shallow, of which the greatest source is our own ignorance of the great designs of the Perfecter of men! The Lord pities our childish sorrow, but He does not regard it so as to stop His hands from His cleansing work. “Let not your soul spare for his crying,” said Solomon—and our wise Father, when He is chastening us, does not spare us for our crying. What if the metal that is put into the furnace should be sensitive when the crucible is hot and should cry out, “Oh, take me out! The fire is too hot! I cannot bear it. I am dissolving! I am melting! Take me out”? Would the assayer regard the entreaties of the metal? Ah, no! And so, when we are in the furnace, the Refiner sits still. Why should He be flurried? He knows what He is doing and He knows that His Divine methods are wise and Infallible.

He is not hurting the silver, but doing it lasting service. He is not even putting it through a needless process. He is taking the shortest way of working when He seems to be longest in His assays. There is a haste that is not good speed and God uses not such haste as that—He moves at the pace of *perfection* and that may seem slow to us. He shall sit as a Refiner till you shall ask, “Does He care at all for me?” Carnal reason may judge

as it pleases as to the indifference of Him who seems to sit at ease while His people are melted in the flames, but faith is full-well assured that in the attitude of the Divine Refiner there is real attention. Why does the Refiner sit, but because He is resolved to steadily watch the crucible? He will not go away and leave it, even for a moment, lest the heat should grow too great or a certain point should be passed over when His Presence would be essential to the success of the process.

I have often heard that a refiner sits and looks at the silver till he can see his own reflection in it. Though I have heard that venerable story many times and can see the evident moral of it, I have my suspicions as to its being a matter of fact. I certainly should not like to be the refiner who had such a task to do, for when a crucible is in the white heat of the furnace, it is almost enough to burn out your eyes to look at it even for an instant! I do not believe that any human being could watch a mass of molten silver glowing in the furnace till he saw his own image there. Christ's eyes can bear the blaze and *He* can watch us in the fires, but I do not use the illustration because I have my doubts about the truth of it.

Our Lord sits as the Refiner at the furnace mouth because He is all attention. He has, as it were, given up all other cares just to sit there and watch His treasure. He is determined that His servants shall be purified—that the sons of Levi shall be purged—and so there He is, everything else laid aside, giving His whole heart and soul to those whom He is refining. "Oh" you say "but you exaggerate if you talk about the Lord's giving all His heart and soul to one of His people." No, I do not. The Lord Jesus watches each one of His people as intensely as if He had no other. Finite minds must have a center, somewhere, and as that center changes, so our circumference of thought and action shifts. But God's center is *everywhere* and His circumference is nowhere!

Each one of us may be in the center of the Divine mind and yet none of the redeemed may be any the less near because of it. Jesus watches each one—you, me, 50,000 others—all of them His chosen ones that are undergoing the purifying process. He watches each one as if there were never another for His blessed eyes to rest upon. He is all attention, watching not as children gaze on soldiers in the fire, but as practical refiners watch their precious metal! Poor, bowed Heart, Jesus is all attention! His sitting down is not because He forgets, but because He *remembers!*—

***"God's furnace does in Zion stand,
But Zion's God sits by,
As the refiner views His gold,
With an observant eye."***

Always observing, always watching. Jesus shall sit—"He shall sit as a refiner."

But we may notice more than this. I think I see in the sitting down of the Refiner a settled patience, as if He seemed to say, "This is stern work and I will sit down to it, for it will need care, time and constant watchfulness. This metal may need to be purified in a furnace of earth seven times, but I am set upon the perfecting of the work and, therefore, here I

place Myself. I shall bear with this man till I have delivered him from his faults. I shall bear with this woman till I have made something of her—till I have taken away that which weakens and injures her character. I mean to bear with this poor, petulant, unbelieving, complaining, selfish, groaning mortal—My Spirit has given him some love for Me and some life in Me—and, therefore, I will bear with him till his life and love shall have conquered all earthly grossness and he shall be a lump of pure metal fit for My Father's treasury."

The Lord has had boundless patience with some of us already, for we required a world of purifying and we have been very slow to receive it. How many sermons have we heard and yet how little have we been purified by the Word of God? How often has the Spirit striven with us and yet every thought is not yet brought into captivity? How often have we had near and true fellowship with Christ and yet have again forsaken Him? How frequently have we had to endure the furnace of affliction and yet our dross and tin are not removed? The Refiner still perseveres with settled resolve of ceaseless love. He will not give up His gracious task. He did not come hastily to the furnace door and shut us in and then leave us while He minded other matters. He has been sitting near His work ever since He began it—even as the refiner sits close to his work—and He means to stay as long as the work remains unfinished. He will not be gone till all is over. Here, then, Faith sees Divine attention and settled patience where Unbelief dared to suspect unfeeling indifference!

I find, in looking at the original, that the word for, "sit," is one which is used many times in Scripture for the posture of a king upon a throne—it is a sort of regal sitting down. So that we have here the posture of power. "He shall sit as a refiner," signifies, then, I take it, that He who seems indifferent, but who is constantly observant and patient, is seated on His Throne possessing infinite power over all things so that the process which He is watching can be checked or quickened according to His own will and wish. He reigns as a Refiner. He has power over every coal, over every single jet of gassy flame! He has power over every breath of air that fans the fire and over the furnace to its inmost center and its utmost vehemence. He has power over the metal, itself, and its dross and all that is excellent about it as well as all that is vile.

Oh, this is a grand consolation! He that has undertaken to purify us can do it, for He sits on the Throne of boundless might! Nothing short of an Omnipotent Savior could have saved me! It were ill news for me if men could show that Christ were not Divine, for short of a Divine Redeemer I know I shall never be perfected! No strength but that which *made* me can make me new! Only He that says, "I kill and I make alive," can ever kill my sin and make me alive unto God. Oh, Christian, this ought to be a delight to you, that He who sits as a refiner sits on the Throne while He is refining you and exercises Sovereign Grace and infinite power while dealing with your soul! Jesus reigns in the work of sanctification, having all things at His disposal, and He can and will perform that which He has begun—

"Grace will complete what Grace begins,

**To save from sorrows or from sins.
The work that wisdom undertakes
Eternal mercy ne'er forsakes."**

Eternal power performs what everlasting love designs.

So I conceive that the text may also teach us the perfect perseverance of Christ in the work of the purifying of His people. "He shall sit as a refiner." Might not your backsliding, after you had once reached a great height of sanctity, have disappointed Christ and made Him leave you? Yes, if it were not true of Him, "I am God: I change not," He would have left you to be consumed! But you are not consumed because, from His blessed purpose He will not swerve. Oh, how many times you and I have seemed to make advances towards purity but have gone back, again, to folly, thus manifesting the abundance of our alloy! It did seem as if, at last, the blessed flame of Grace had begun to make us bright and yet we have dulled again back to the old state.

And where is the Refiner? Has He gone? By no means. There He is! He has been sitting as a refiner and He is still sitting! That is a blessed text—"He shall not fail nor be discouraged." There is much to discourage Him, but He is not discouraged! There is much to make Him relinquish the work, but He determines not to fail in it. His mind is made up and well it may be, for He has paid in bloody sweat and in His heart's blood, the ransom price to purchase us and He will never leave half-effected what He has spent His life to achieve! What He has redeemed, He will refine! Gethsemane and Calvary have bound the Refiner to His task.

He undertook a stupendous labor and He went through with it till He shouted from the Cross, "It is finished!" And, therefore, we may rest assured that He will go on with the further portions of His great enterprise till, from His Throne above He will say, "It is finished," as He surveys every one of us, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing"—pure lumps of gold and silver brought Home by Himself without a speck of dross about us. Oh, blessed hope! Where should we dare to indulge it but in the Presence of an almighty Savior whose Immutable oath has bound Him to carry out the work of our perfection?

II. Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, suffer a few words upon THE GREAT OBJECTIVE OF OUR LORD'S REFINING WORK. This point has come up all along. May the Spirit of God instruct us concerning it. The great objective of His refining is that He may deliver us from all evil and make us perfect. Remember, the subjects of purifying are His own chosen ones—"He shall purify the sons of Levi." Levi was the tribe taken out of the rest for God's service. The Lord has a people whom He has set apart unto Himself and these He will purify! Do others think that He does them an injustice by this act of choice?

Would they like to be purified? Then, depend upon it, He will not refuse them! No, the quarrel lies in words and has no truth in it. Men *pretend* to be angry with electing love, though they have no desire for it, themselves! God's election is an election to holiness and this is a thing which men, in their heart of hearts, do not desire. Sirs, if you do not wish for purification

and holiness, why should you quarrel with God because He doesn't give it to you? Yet unholy men rave at election to holiness and call it partiality and I know not what, besides! You dogs in the manger, will you always howl at God because He gives to His own sheep that which you will not care to have? If you wish for it, you may have it! Free is the Gospel to every soul under Heaven that desires it!

The Lord proclaims, "Whoever will, let him come and take the Water of Life freely," but if men turn their backs on Heaven's ever-flowing Fountain, shall they, afterwards, quarrel with the election of God because He causes some to come whom He makes willing in the day of His power? They may quarrel if they will, but high overhead rolls the dread thunder of that awful Word of God, "He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion." God is Sovereign in His gifts of Grace and does after His own mind. He refuses Grace to none, but yet He will have a people of His own on whom His sanctifying work shall be wrought. "He shall purify the sons of Levi."

The Refiner begins His work by convicting His people of their need of purity. "What? Purify the sons of Levi? Do they need it? Surely, Reuben, Manasseh, Gad—these might need purifying—but Levi opens and shuts the door of the House of God! It is a Levite that sacrifices, that enters within the veil. Does *he* require purifying?" Yes, that he does. "He *shall purify* the sons of Levi"—the best, the very best, the holiest—those that come near to God—the true silver and the real gold! He shall purify these! Brother, Sister, have you a notion that *you* do *not* need purifying? Discard it, for if we walk in the light as God is in the light and have close fellowship with God, yet we still need the cleansing blood. "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son," still cleans us from all sin." Still we need the purging Spirit or else there remains enough of evil about the man that is nearest Heaven's gates to make a Judas Iscariot of him if Grace does not prevent. "He shall purify the sons of Levi"—the pure shall be purified and the clean shall be yet further cleansed.

Did you ever notice that the branch which feels most of the knife and gets most of the pruning is not the dead branch? Not that withered, crooked branch does the gardener wound with the knife! No, the best branch that bears most fruit is most worthy of the gardener's visits and shall be most favored with them. That ore which has the most gold in it, in proportion to the quartz, is the likeliest to get into the fire. He that has most of refinement is he on whom Christ will carry out his refining work. "He shall purify the sons of Levi."

Further, observe that He not only convinces them of their need of this purity, but He remedies their *impurity*. He shall actually purify them as gold and silver! The point is the *thoroughness* of it. This piece of wood which makes my pulpit, if it is defiled, it is dusted and it is at once sufficiently cleansed. Your platters are washed—that is all. Your furniture may need beating, dusting and many processes, but there is nothing thorough in them compared with the metaphor of the text—"He shall purify them as gold and silver." They must go into the *fire*. The purging that God gives

His people is not the washing of the outside of the cup and platter! It is the cleansing of the soul, the heart—the purging of the man—a *fiery* purging! Fire does not merely go about—it penetrates and passes right into it. The metal is hot! It is melted! It flows—the fire has dissolved the mass.

We say in the hymn, “Refining fire, go through my heart,” and that is the nearest approximation of language. But fire does something more than go through the metal. It seems to get into the very essence and nature and character of the metal and fuses it all, making it all feel its supreme force. The Lord’s purification of His people, in order to make them fit to be with Him in Heaven, is a fire process—it is mysterious, inward, penetrating, consuming, transforming. His Spirit burns like fire! His Word, like fire, goes through and through the soul! His holy fellowship causes us to say, “My heart melted while my Beloved spoke.” And His fiery trials, too, when blest by the Spirit, seem to melt the very being of the man.

This process is intended to be thorough, that it may be abiding. If you get a piece of gold or silver, though it has been through the fire, it may grow dull but it cannot, again, become impure and alloyed. Silver will soon oxidize upon the surface, but for all that, the bulk of the silver vessel is not injured at all—it remains pure silver after it has been through the fire. The work is done and done thoroughly. The purifications of God will last throughout eternity. Have you ever reflected upon the fact that when Christ’s refining work is done upon us there will never be any need for it again? Blessed be God, there is no purgatorial fire! We need not dread that we have yet to pass through purging flames in another world, for Jesus has well-refined the sons of Levi and they are clean every whit!

Believers are taken up to Heaven at once—as soon as they quit this world. If we were not thoroughly purified before we entered there, we should be under a strong temptation to pride. Only think of yourself with a palm branch, my Brothers and Sisters! You fought very badly, too. You with a harp in your hand! Is there not a temptation to strike just one gentle string in praise of what you did or suffered? Say not that you could not be thus tempted—why, an angel fell from Heaven! The Son of the Morning—a greater being than you—could not stand amidst the glories of Paradise! Pride dragged Lucifer from Heaven and hurled him down to the darkest deeps!

Oh, joy, joy, joy! The same shall never happen to you! You will never be proud in Paradise—you will never be discontented in Heaven. Do you say, “I should think not”? I do not know. If you could go to Heaven as you are, you would be. You would be sorry to think that there is no temple there and no more sea. And a great many things might make you dissatisfied, but you will not be discontented, for you will be purified! You will not speak sharply to your neighbor in Heaven! You will not think he sings too loudly or is too demonstrative in his worship! You will not quarrel with anybody in Heaven, for you will have *nothing* in you which can lead to sin!

See how splendidly the Refiner will do His work, then, so that throughout eternity, when this poor world shall all dissolve in smoke and the sun shall have burnt out like an expiring coal—when the moon shall be black

as a sackcloth of hair and all earth-born things shall have grown hoary and given way to corruption's finger—you shall still be young and fresh and pure and perfect as the God that loved you and that made you so! Oh, well may we be content to let the fire burn and let the coals glow as much as they will since it can be only for a very little while and then come the ages, the eternities, the God, the Christ, the Heaven which He has prepared for us when we are prepared for them!

This, then, is the objective of His refining.

III. Thirdly, and to conclude, WHAT WILL BE THE IMMEDIATE RESULT OF THIS REFINING AS CHRIST CARRIES IT ON? It will be this—"That they may offer to the Lord an offering of righteousness." First, these Levites shall attend to their business. They ought to have been working at the Temple, but they had forgotten their high calling. The sons of Levi had taken up their portion in the world, though their God had never given them any, for He gave no portion to Levi when the land was divided among the tribes. "The Lord's portion is His people" and the Lord is the portion of *their* inheritance. The Levites had gotten away from their spiritual calling and had given themselves up to mind this and that—but it is pleasant to observe that when God purifies them, they begin to do their own business—"That they may offer to the Lord."

Oh, Beloved, if you have been refined by the Word of God; if you have been refined by the Spirit; if you have been refined by heavenly joys; if you have been refined by sanctified sorrows, you wish to serve God much more than ever you did before. You now pray that if you have lived to self in *any* degree, you may be forgiven, for you wish to live to Christ and to Him alone! Now, as a Levite, you say, "What can I do for God? There is nothing here worth living for, but to love and serve Him. Here, Lord, tell me what You would have me to do. I desire to do it at once." Brothers and Sisters thank God for every trial you have suffered if it leads you to offer your sacrifice! I will bless God for all I have endured, myself, if I am enabled to fulfill my priesthood, for are we not a nation of priests, a peculiar people, set apart to offer sacrifice to God? And this is to be the result of refinement—that we do good work and service unto God.

Some of you need a little pushing on in this direction, for I know a great many Christians who live as if the main point in religion was to enjoy yourself. "I *enjoyed* that sermon. I *enjoyed* that Prayer Meeting." Yes, that is quite right. But have you *done* anything? Have you *served* the Master? Have you offered anything to Jesus? Have you brought forth fruit to His Glory? Oh, it is a good thing to be watered! It is a blessed thing to stand in the warm sunlight and grow! But after the watering and the sunshine must come the fruit-bearing or we shall be barren fig trees, after all! And so it is in the text, you see—"That they may offer unto the Lord an offering."

And then, next, they are not only to do their work, but they are to do it well. "They must offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness," for, oh, we may do much for God that looks very pretty, but when we get into trial and look back upon our service by the furnace light we do not think much

of it! Have you ever taken a little time to look back upon your service to God and have you not wondered at yourself that you have done it so badly? Have you not said, "Please, God, may I address that class again? By Your Grace I will be more passionately in earnest." Have you not said, "Please, God, may I get out to that village to preach again? This time, by Your Grace, I will speak with all my soul and nothing else but Christ shall be my theme."

Have we not often wished we could do our lifework over again that we might do it better? I do not think that there is any use in that wish. Let us improve what is to be done in the *future* rather than wish to undo the past! Let us buckle on our harness and ask God to give us more spiritual intensity that what is done may be a sacrifice offered in righteousness unto the Lord. And then another result of this purification is that they were accepted, for the next verse says, "Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord as in the days of old." When God accepts our persons, He accepts our offerings—but if we are not *ourselves* accepted—then that which we do is rejected. When the Lord Jesus Christ enables us to live by faith in Him and to see that we are "accepted in the Beloved," and when that faith helps us to work in a right spirit and serve God from a pure motive, then we, ourselves, and our work are pleasant unto God as in former days.

God grant that the blessed processes of His Providence and of His Grace which are being carried on in His people may be carried on in you and me that we may serve God with perfect hearts all our days! I think I heard somebody say, "I do not want putting through that process. I do not wish for such purifying." Have you seen the great masses of slag that they throw out from the furnace? They lie in great heaps at the pit's mouth. Will these be a picture of you and your eternal condition? Reprobate silver shall men call them because God has rejected them! Will you be the slag cast away? The dross left forever? Oh, Eternity! Eternity! What must it be to be shipwrecked on your shoreless sea and drifted forever as a waif and stray from God and hope! Eternity! Eternity! What must it be to be rejected and cast away from the Presence of God and from the Glory of His power—thrown out upon the waste heap of the universe, forever given up!

God save any man from that! Oh, it were worth wading through a thousand Hells to obtain that which makes existence worth having—namely, rightness with God! But, oh, if there were nothing else to lose but God's love; nothing else to earn by neglect of Divine things but to be rejected of God, I would plead with you with my whole soul that you would seek the Lord now! Cry mightily to the Divine Savior that He may now purge you with His precious blood from all the guilt of sin! Cry to Him that He may then go on with the second process by which He shall purge you from the power and habit and defilement of sin—and make you, like Himself—immaculate before the Omniscient! God grant it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD

NO. 1

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 7, 1855,
 BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK

*“I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.”
 Malachi 3:6.*

IT has been said by someone that “the proper study of mankind is man.” I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God’s elect is God. The proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy which can ever engage the attention of a child of God is the name, the nature, the Person, the work, the doings and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity—so deep that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and grapple with—in them we feel a kind of self-content and go our way with the thought, “Behold I am wise.” But when we come to this master science, finding that our plumb line cannot sound its depth and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thoughts that vain man would be wise, but he is like a wild ass’ colt and with the solemn exclamation, “I am but of yesterday and know nothing.” No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God. We shall be obliged to feel—

*“Great God, how infinite are You,
 What worthless worms are we!”*

But while the subject *humbles* the mind it also *expands* it. He who often thinks of God will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe. He may be a naturalist, boasting of his ability to dissect a beetle, anatomize a fly, or arrange insects and animals in classes with well-nigh unutterable names. He may be a geologist, able to discourse of the megatherium and the plesiosaurus and all kinds of extinct animals. He may imagine that his science, whatever it is, ennobles and enlarges his mind. I dare say it does, but after all, the most excellent study for expanding the soul is the science of Christ and Him crucified and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity. And while humbling and expanding, this subject is eminently *consolatory*. Oh, there is, in contemplating Christ, a balm for every wound! In musing on the Father, there is a quietus for every grief and in the influence of the Holy Spirit there is a balsam for every sore. Would you lose your sorrows? Would you drown your cares? Then go plunge yourself in the Godhead’s deepest sea—be lost in His immensity. And you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul, so calm the swelling billows of grief and sorrow—so speak peace to the winds of trial—as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead. It is to that subject that I invite you this morning. We shall present you with one view of it—that is the *immutability* of the glorious Jehovah. “I am,” says my text, “Jehovah,” (for so it should be translated) “I am Jehovah, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.”

There are three things this morning. First of all, an *unchanging* God. Secondly, the *persons* who derive benefit from this glorious attribute, “the sons of Jacob.” And thirdly, the *benefit* they so derive, they “are not consumed.” We address ourselves to these points.

I. First of all, we have set before us the doctrine of THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD. “I am God, I change not.” Here I shall attempt to expound, or rather to enlarge the thought and then afterwards to bring a few arguments to prove its truth.

1. I shall offer some exposition of my text by first saying that God is Jehovah and He changes not *in His essence*. We cannot tell you what Godhead is. We do not know what substance that is which we call God. It is an existence, it is a Being. But what that is we know not. However, whatever it is, we call it His essence and that essence never changes. The substance of mortal things is ever changing. The mountains with their snow-white crowns doff their old diadems in

summer, in rivers trickling down their sides, while the storm cloud gives them another coronation. The ocean, with its mighty floods, loses its water when the sunbeams kiss the waves and snatch them in mists to Heaven. Even the sun himself requires fresh fuel from the hand of the Infinite Almighty to replenish his ever-burning furnace. All creatures change. Man, especially as to his body, is always undergoing revolution. Very probably there is not a single particle in my body which was in it a few years ago. This frame has been worn away by activity, its atoms have been removed by friction, fresh particles of matter have in the meantime constantly accrued to my body and so it has been replenished—its substance is altered. The fabric of which this world is made is ever passing away like a stream of water—drops are running away and others are following after, keeping the river still full—but always changing in its elements. But God is perpetually the same. He is not composed of any substance or material, but is Spirit—pure, essential and ethereal Spirit—and, therefore, He is immutable. He remains everlastingly the same. There are no furrows on His eternal brow. No age has palsied Him—no years have marked Him with the mementoes of their flight. He sees ages pass, but with Him it is ever *now*. He is the great I AM—the Great Unchangeable. Mark you, His essence did not undergo a change when it became united with the manhood. When Christ in past years did gird Himself with mortal clay, the essence of His divinity was not changed—flesh did not become God, nor did God become flesh by a real actual change of nature. The two were united in hypostatical union, but the Godhead was still the same. It was the same when He was a babe in the manger, as it was when He stretched the curtains of Heaven—it was the same God that hung upon the Cross and whose blood flowed down in a purple river. The self-same God that holds the world upon His everlasting shoulders and bears in His hands the keys of death and Hell. He never has been changed in His essence, not even by His incarnation—He remains everlastingly, eternally, the one unchanging God, the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither the shadow of a change.

2. He changes not in His *attributes*. Whatever the attributes of God were of old, they are the same now. And of each of them we may sing, As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen. Was He *powerful*? Was He the mighty God when He spoke the world out of the womb of non-existence? Was He the Omnipotent when He piled the mountains and scooped out the hollow places for the rolling deep? Yes, He was powerful then and His arm is unpalsied now. He is the same giant in His might. The sap of His nourishment is still wet and the strength of His soul stands the same forever. Was He wise when He constituted this mighty globe, when He laid the foundations of the universe? Had He *wisdom* when He planned the way of our salvation and when, from all eternity, He marked out His awful plans? Yes and He is wise now. He is not less skillful, He has not less knowledge. His eyes which see all things are undimmed. His ears which hear all the cries, sighs, sobs and groans of His people, are not rendered heavy by the years which He has heard their prayers. He is unchanged in His wisdom. He knows as much now as ever—neither more nor less. He has the same consummate skill and the same infinite forecasting. He is unchanged, blessed be His name, in His *justice*. Just and holy was He in the past—just and holy is He now. He is unchanged in His *Truth*—He has promised and He brings it to pass. He has said it and it shall be done. He varies not in the *goodness*, generosity and benevolence of His nature. He is not become an Almighty tyrant, whereas He was once an Almighty Father. His strong love stands like a granite rock unmoved by the hurricanes of our iniquity. And blessed be His dear name, He is unchanged in His *love*. When He first wrote the Covenant, how full His heart was with affection to His people. He knew that His Son must die to ratify the articles of that agreement. He knew right well that He must rend His best Beloved from His heart and send Him down to earth to bleed and die. He did not hesitate to sign that mighty Covenant. Nor did He shun its fulfillment. He loves as much now as He did then. And when suns shall cease to shine and moons to show their feeble light, He still shall love on forever and forever. Take any one attribute of God and I will write *semper idem* on it (always the same). Take any one thing you can say of God, now, and it may be said not only in the dark past, but in the bright future. It shall always remain the same—“I am Jehovah, I change not”—impressed on His heart it remains.

3. Then again, God changes not in His *plans*. That man began to build, but was not able to finish and, therefore, he changed his plan—as every wise man would do in such a case—he built upon a smaller foundation and commenced again. But has it ever been said that God began to build but was not able to finish? No. When He has boundless stores at His command and when His own right hand would create worlds as numerous as drops of morning dew, shall He ever stay because He has not power? Or reverse, or alter, or disarrange His plan because He cannot carry it out? “But,” say some, “perhaps God never had a plan.” Do you think God is more foolish than yourself then, Sir? Do you go to work without a plan? “No,” you say, “I have always a scheme.” So has God. Every man has his plan and God has a plan, too. God is a master mind—He arranged everything in His gigantic intellect long before He did it—and once having settled

it, mark you, He never alters it. “This shall be done,” says He and the iron hand of destiny marks it down and it is brought to pass. “This is My purpose,” and it stands, nor can earth or Hell alter it. “This is My decree,” says He. Promulgate it angels—rend it down from the gate of Heaven you devils. But you cannot alter the decree. It shall be done. God alters not His plans—why should He? He is Almighty and, therefore, can perform His pleasure. Why should He? He is the All-wise and, therefore, cannot have planned wrongly. Why should He? He is the everlasting God and, therefore, cannot die before His plan is accomplished. Why should He change? You worthless atoms of existence, ephemera of the day! You creeping insects upon this bay leaf of existence! You may change *your* plans, but He shall never, never change *His*. Then has He told me that His plan is to save me? If so, I am safe—

*“My name from the palms of His hands
Eternity will not erase;
Impressed on His heart it remains,
In marks of indelible Grace.”*

4. Yet again, God is unchanging in His *promises*. Ah, we love to speak about the sweet promises of God. But if we could ever suppose that one of them could be changed—we would not talk anything more about them. If I thought that the notes of the bank of England could not be cashed next week, I would decline to take them and if I thought that God’s promises would never be fulfilled—if I thought that God would see it right to alter some word in His promises—farewell Scriptures! I want immutable things—and I find that I have immutable promises when I turn to the Bible—for, “by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie,” He has signed, confirmed and sealed every promise of His. The Gospel is not “yes and no,” it is not promising today and denying tomorrow. The Gospel is “yes, yes,” to the glory of God. Believer, there was a delightful promise which you had yesterday—and this morning when you turned to the Bible the promise was not sweet. Do you know why? Do you think the promise had changed? Ah, no, *you* changed—that is where the matter lies. You had been eating some of the grapes of Sodom and your mouth was thereby put out of taste and you could not detect the sweetness. But there was the same honey there, depend upon it—the same preciousness. “Oh,” says one child of God, “I had built my house firmly once upon some stable promises. There came a wind and I said, O Lord, I am cast down and I shall be lost.” Oh, the promises were *not* cast down. The foundations were not removed. It was your little “wood, hay, stubble” hut that you had been building. It was *that* which fell down. *You* have been shaken *on* the rock, not the rock *under* you. But let me tell you what is the best way of living in the world. I have heard that a gentleman said to a Negro, “I can’t think how it is you are always so happy in the Lord and I am often downcast.” “Why Massa,” said he, “I throw myself flat down on the promise—there I lie. You stand on the promise—you have a little to do with it and down you go when the wind comes. And then you cry, ‘Oh, I am down.’ Whereas I go flat on the promise at once and that is why I fear no fall.” Then let us always say, “Lord there is the promise. It is Your business to fulfill it.” Down I go on the promise flat! No standing up for me. That is where you should go—prostrate on the promise. And remember, every promise is a rock, an unchanging thing. Therefore, at His feet cast yourself and rest there forever!

5. But now comes one jarring note to spoil the theme. To some of you God is unchanging in His *threats*. If every promise stands fast and every oath of the Covenant is fulfilled, hark you, Sinner—mark the word—hear the death knell of your carnal hopes! See the funeral of the fleshly trusting. Every threat of God, as well as every promise shall be fulfilled. Talk of decrees! I will tell you of a decree —“He that *believes not* shall be damned.” That is a decree and a statute that can never change. Be as good as you please, be as moral as you can, be as honest as you will, walk as uprightly as you may—there stands the unchangeable threat—“He that believes not shall be damned.”

What do you say to that, Moralist? Oh, you wish you could alter it and say, “He that does not live a holy life shall be damned.” That will be true. But it does not say so. It says, “He that *believes not*.” Here is the stone of stumbling and the rock of offense. But you cannot alter it—you either believe or be damned, says the Bible. And mark—that threat of God is as unchangeable as God Himself. And when a thousand years of Hell’s torments shall have passed away you shall look on high and see written in burning letters of fire, “He that believes not *shall* be damned.”

“But, Lord, I *am* damned.” Nevertheless it says “*shall* be” still. And when a million years have rolled away and you are exhausted by your pains and agonies, you shall turn up your eye and still read “SHALL BE DAMNED,” unchanged, unaltered. And when you shall have thought that eternity must have spun out its last thread—that every particle of that which we call eternity must have run out, you shall still see it written up there, “SHALL BE DAMNED.” O terrible

thought! How dare I utter it? But I must. You must be warned, Sirs, “lest you also come into this place of torment.” You must be told rough things, for if God’s Gospel is not a rough thing, believe me, the Law is a rough thing.

Mount Sinai is a rough thing. Woe unto the watchman that warns not the ungodly! God is unchanging in His threats. Beware, O Sinner, for “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

6. We must just hint at one thought before we pass on and that is—God is unchanging in the *objects of His love*—not only in His love, but in the *objects* of it—

*“If ever it should come to pass
That sheep of Christ might fall away,
My fickle, feeble soul, alas,
Would fall a thousand times a day.”*

If one dear saint of God had perished, so might all. If one of the Covenant Ones is lost, so may all be and then there is no Gospel promise true. Then the Bible is a lie and there is nothing in it worth my acceptance. I will be an infidel at once, when I can believe that a saint of God can ever fall finally. If God has loved me once, then He will love me forever—

*“Did Jesus once upon me shine,
Then Jesus is forever mine.”*

The objects of everlasting love never change. Those whom God has called, He will justify. Whom He has justified, He will sanctify. And whom He sanctifies, He will glorify.

1. Thus having taken a great deal too much time, perhaps, in simply expanding the thought of an unchanging God, I will now try to prove that He *is unchangeable*. I am not much of an argumentative preacher, but one argument that I will mention is this—the very *existence and Being of a God* seem to me to imply immutability. Let me think a moment. There is a God. This God rules and governs all things—this God fashioned the world—He upholds and maintains it. What kind of Being must He be? It does strike me that you cannot think of a *changeable* God. I conceive that the thought is so repugnant to common sense that if you for one moment think of a changing God, the words seem to clash and you are obliged to say, “Then He must be a kind of man,” and you have a Mormonism idea of God!

I imagine it is impossible to conceive of a changing God. It is so to me. Others may be capable of such an idea, but I could not entertain it. I could no more think of a changing God than I could of a round square, or any other absurdity. The thing seems so contrary that I am obliged, when once I say, God, to include the idea of an unchanging Being.

2. Well, I think that one argument will be enough, but another good argument may be found in the fact of *God’s perfection*. I believe God to be a perfect Being. Now, if He is a perfect Being, He cannot change. Do you not see this? Suppose I am perfect today. If it were possible for me to change, should I be perfect tomorrow after the alteration? If I changed, I must either change from a good state to a better—and then if I could get better, I could not be perfect *now*—or else from a better state to a worse—and if I were worse, I should not be perfect *then*. If I am perfect, I cannot be altered without being imperfect. If I am perfect today, I must be the same tomorrow if I am to be perfect then. So, if God is perfect, He must be the same—for change would imply imperfection now, or imperfection then.

3. Again, there is the fact of *God’s infinity*, which puts change out of the question. God is an infinite Being. What do you mean by that? There is no man who can tell you what he means by an infinite being. But there cannot be two infinities. If one thing is infinite, there is no room for anything else—for infinite means all. It means not bounded, not finite, having no end. Well, there cannot be two infinities. If God is infinite, today, and then should change and be infinite tomorrow, there would be two infinities. But that cannot be.

Suppose He is infinite and then changes, He must become finite and could not be God—either He is finite today and finite tomorrow, or infinite today and finite tomorrow, or finite today and infinite tomorrow—all of which suppositions are equally absurd. The fact of His being an infinite Being at once quashes the thought of His being a changeable Being. Infinity has written on its very brow the word “immutability.”

4. But then, dear Friends, let us look at *the past*—and there we shall gather some proofs of God’s immutable nature. “Has He spoken and has He not done it? Has He sworn and has it not come to pass?” Can it not be said of Jehovah, He has done all His will and He has accomplished all His purpose?” Turn you to Philistia—ask where she is. God said, “Howl Ashdod and you gates of Gaza, for you shall fall,” and where are they? Where is Edom? Ask Petra and its ruined walls. Will they not echo back the truth that God has said, “Edom shall be a prey and shall be destroyed”? Where is Babel and where is Nineveh? Where is Moab and where is Ammon? Where are the nations God has said He would destroy? Has He not uprooted them and cast out the remembrance of them from the earth?

And has God cast off His people? Has He once been unmindful of His promise? Has He once broken His oath and Covenant, or once departed from His plan? Ah, no. Point to one instance in history where God has changed! You cannot, Sirs—for throughout all history there stands the fact—God has been immutable in His purposes. I think I hear someone say, “I can remember one passage in Scripture where God changed!” And so did I think, once. The case I mean, is that of the death of Hezekiah. Isaiah came in and said, “Hezekiah, you must die, your disease is incurable, set your house in order.”

He turned his face to the wall and began to pray. And before Isaiah was in the outer court, he was told to go back and say, “you shall live fifteen years more.” You may think that proves that God changes. But really, I cannot see in it the slightest proof in the world. How do you know that God did not know that? Oh, but God *did* know it—He knew that Hezekiah would live. Then He did not change, for if He knew that, how could He change? That is what I want to know. But do you know one little thing?—that Hezekiah’s son Manasseh was not born at that time. And had Hezekiah died there would have been no Manasseh and no Josiah and no Christ, because Christ came from that very line!

You will find that Manasseh was twelve years old when his father died—so that he must have been born three years after this. And do you not believe that God decreed the birth of Manasseh and foreknew it? Certainly. Then He decreed that Isaiah should go and tell Hezekiah that his disease was incurable and then say also in the same breath, “But I will cure it and you shall live.” He said that to stir up Hezekiah to prayer. He spoke, in the first place as a man. “According to all human probability your disease is incurable and you must die.” Then He waited till Hezekiah prayed—then came a little “but” at the end of the sentence.

Isaiah had not finished the sentence. He said, “you must put your house in order for there is no human cure—but” (and then he walked out. Hezekiah prayed a little and then he came in again and said) “*But* I will heal you.” Where is there any contradiction there, except in the brain of those who fight against the Lord and wish to make Him a changeable Being?

II. Now secondly, let me say a word on THE PERSONS TO WHOM THIS UNCHANGEABLE GOD IS A BENEFIT. “I am God I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” Now, who are “the sons of Jacob”? Who can rejoice in an immutable God?

1. First, they are the *sons of God’s election*. For it is written, “Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated, the children being not yet born, neither having done good nor evil.” It was written, “The elder shall serve the younger.” “The sons of Jacob—

*“Are the sons of God’s election,
Who through Sovereign Grace believe;
By eternal destination
Grace and Glory they receive.”*

God’s *elect* are here meant by “the sons of Jacob”—those whom He foreknew and foreordained to everlasting salvation!

2. By “the sons of Jacob” are meant, in the second place, *persons who enjoy peculiar rights and titles*. Jacob, you know, had no rights by birth, but he soon acquired them. He exchanged a mess of pottage with his brother, Esau, and thus gained the birthright. I do not justify the means. But he did also obtain the blessing and so acquired peculiar rights. By “the sons of Jacob” is meant persons who have peculiar rights and titles. Unto them who believe, He has given the right and power to become sons of God. They have an interest in the blood of Christ. They have a right to “enter in through the gates into the city”—they have a title to eternal honors. They have a promise to everlasting glory. They have a right to call themselves sons of God. Oh, there are peculiar rights and privileges belonging to the “sons of Jacob.”

3. Next, these “sons of Jacob” *were men of peculiar manifestations*. Jacob had had peculiar manifestations from his God and thus he was highly honored. Once at night he lay down and slept. He had the hedges for his curtains, the sky for his canopy, a stone for his pillow and the earth for his bed. Oh, then he had a peculiar manifestation. There was a ladder and he saw the angels of God ascending and descending. He thus had a manifestation of Christ Jesus as the ladder which reaches from earth to Heaven—up and down which angels came to bring us mercies. Then what a manifestation there was at Mahanaim when the angels of God met him—and again at Peniel, when He wrestled with God and saw Him face to face. Those were peculiar manifestations—and this passage refers to those who, like Jacob, have had peculiar manifestations.

Now then, how many of you have had personal manifestations? “Oh,” you say “that is enthusiasm—that is fanaticism.” Well it is a blessed enthusiasm, too, for the sons of Jacob have had peculiar manifestations. They have talked with God as a man talks with his friend—they have whispered in the ear of Jehovah. Christ has been with them to sup with them and they with Christ. And the Holy Spirit has shone into their souls with such a mighty radiance that they could not doubt about special manifestations. The “sons of Jacob” are the men who enjoy these manifestations.

4. Then again, they are *men of peculiar trials*. Ah, poor Jacob! I should not choose Jacob’s lot if I had not the prospect of Jacob’s blessing. For a hard lot his was. He had to run away from his father’s house to Laban’s—and then that surly old Laban cheated him all the years he was there—cheated him of his wife, cheated him in his wages, cheated him in his flocks and cheated him all through the story. By-and-by he had to run away from Laban who pursued him and overtook him. Next came Esau with four hundred men to cut him up root and branch. Then there was a season of prayer and afterwards he wrestled God—and had to go all his life with his thigh out of joint. And a little further on, Raphael, his dearly beloved, died. Then his daughter Dinah is led astray and the sons murder the Shechemites. Then his dear son, Joseph, is sold into Egypt and a famine comes. Then Reuben goes up to his couch and pollutes it—Judah commits incest with his own daughter-in-law and all his sons become a plague to him. At last Benjamin is taken away and the old man, almost broken-hearted, cries, “Joseph is not and Simeon is not and you will take Benjamin away?” Never was man more tried than Jacob—all through the one sin of cheating his brother! All through his life God chastised him. But I believe there are many who can sympathize with dear old Jacob. They have had to pass through trials very much like his. Well, cross-bearers, God says, “I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” Poor tried Souls! You are not consumed because of the unchanging nature of your God. Now do not get to fretting and say, with the self-conceit of misery, “I am the man who has seen affliction.” Why “the Man of Sorrows” was afflicted more than you! Jesus was indeed a mourner. You only see the skirts of the garments of affliction. You never have trials like His. You do not understand what troubles mean. You have hardly sipped the cup of trouble—you have only had a drop or two, but Jesus drunk the dregs. Fear not, says God, “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob,” men of peculiar trials, “are not consumed.”

5. Then one more thought about who are the “sons of Jacob,” for I should like you to find out whether you are “sons of Jacob,” yourselves. They are *men of peculiar character*. For though there were some things about Jacob’s character which we cannot commend, there are one or two things which God commends. There was Jacob’s faith, by which Jacob had his name written among the mighty worthies who obtained not the promises on earth but shall obtain them in Heaven. Are you men of faith, Beloved? Do you know what it is to walk by faith, to live by faith, to get your temporary food by faith, to live on spiritual manna—all by faith? Is faith the rule of your life? If so, you are the “sons of Jacob.”

Then Jacob was a man of prayer—a man who wrestled and groaned and prayed. There is a man up yonder who never prayed this morning, before coming up to the House of God. Ah, you poor Heathen, don’t you pray? “No!” he says, “I never thought of such a thing—for years I have not prayed.” Well, I hope you may before you die. Live and die without prayer and you will pray long enough when you get to Hell. There is a woman—she did not pray this morning. She was so busy sending her children to the Sunday school she had no time to pray. No time to pray? Had you time to dress? There is a time for every purpose under Heaven and if you had purposed to pray, you would have prayed. Sons of God cannot live without prayer. They are wrestling Jacobs. They are men in whom the Holy Spirit so works that they can no more live without prayer than I can live without breathing. They must pray. Sirs, mark you, if you are living without prayer, you are living without Christ. And dying like that, your portion will be in the lake which burns with fire. God redeem you, God rescue you from such a lot! But you who are “the sons of Jacob,” take comfort, for God is immutable.

III. Thirdly, I can say only a word about the other point—THE BENEFIT WHICH THESE “SONS OF JACOB” RECEIVE FROM AN UNCHANGING GOD. “Therefore you sons Jacob are not consumed.” “Consumed?” How? How can man be consumed? Why, there are two ways. We might have been consumed in Hell. If God had been a changing God, the “sons of Jacob” here this morning, might have been consumed in Hell. But for God’s unchanging love I should have been a stick in the fire. But there is a way of being consumed in this *world*. There is such a thing as being *condemned* before you die—“condemned already.” There is such a thing as being alive and yet being absolutely dead. We might have been left to our own devices—and then where would we be now? Reveling with the drunkard, blaspheming Almighty God? Oh, had He left you, dearly Beloved, had He been a changing God—you had been among the filthiest of the filthy and the vilest of the vile! Cannot you remember in your life seasons similar to those I have felt? I have gone right to the

edge of sin—some strong temptation has taken hold of both my arms so that I could not wrestle with it. I have been pushed along, dragged as by an awful Satanic power to the very edge of some horrid precipice. I have looked down, down, down and seen my portion. I quivered on the brink of ruin. I have been horrified, as, with my hair upright, I have thought of the sin I was about to commit—the horrible pit into which I was about to fall! A strong arm has saved me. I have started back and cried, O God, could I have gone so near sin and yet come back again? Could I have walked right up to the furnace and not fallen down, like Nebuchadnezzar’s strong men, devoured by the very heat? Oh, is it possible I should be here this morning, when I think of the sins I have committed and the crimes which have crossed my wicked imagination? Yes, I am here, unconsumed, because the Lord changes not. Oh, if He had changed, we should have been consumed in a dozen ways. If the Lord had changed, you and I should have been consumed by ourselves—for after all, Mr. Self is the worst enemy a Christian has. We would have proved suicides to our own souls. We would have mixed the cup of poison for our own spirits, if the Lord had not been an unchanging God and dashed the cup out of our hands when we were about to drink it. Then we would have been consumed by God, Himself, if He had not been a changeless God. We call God a Father—but there is not a father in this world who would not have killed all his children long ago, so provoked would he have been with them—if he had been half as much troubled as God has been with His family. He has the most troublesome family in the whole world—unbelieving, ungrateful, disobedient, forgetful, rebellious, wandering, murmuring and stiff-necked. Well it is that He is long-suffering, or else He would have taken not only the rod, but the sword to some of us long ago! But there was nothing in us to love at first, so there cannot be less now. John Newton used to tell a whimsical story and laugh at it, too, of a good woman who said, in order to prove the doctrine of Election—“Ah, Sir, the Lord must have loved me before I was born, or else He would not have seen anything in me to love afterwards.” I am sure it is true in my case and true in respect to most of God’s people. For there is little to love in them after they are born. If He had not loved them before, He would have seen no reason to choose them after—but since He loved them without works, He still loves them without works. Since their good works did not *win* His affection, bad works cannot *sever* that affection—since their righteousness did not bind His love to them, so their wickedness cannot snap the golden links. He loved them out of pure Sovereign Grace and He will love them still. But we should have been consumed by the devil and by our enemies—consumed by the world, consumed by our sins, by our trials and in a hundred other ways if God had ever changed!

Well, now, time fails us and I can say but little. I have only just cursorily touched on the text. I now hand it to you. May the Lord help you “sons of Jacob” to take home this portion of meat. Digest it well and feed upon it. May the Holy Spirit sweetly apply the glorious things that are written! And may you have “a feast of fat things, of wines on the lees well refined!” Remember God is the same, whatever is removed. Your friends may be disaffected, your ministers may be taken away, everything may change—but God does not. Your Brothers and Sisters may change and cast out your name as vile—but God will still love you! Let your station in life change and your property be gone. Let your whole life be shaken and you become weak and sickly. Let everything flee away—there is one place where change cannot put his finger. There is one name on which mutability can never be written. There is one heart which never can alter. That heart is God’s—that name Love—

*“Trust Him, He will never deceive you.
Though you harshly of Him deem;
He will never, never leave you,
Nor will let you quite leave Him.”*

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

ROBBERS OF GOD

NO. 2156

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 27, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me!”
Malachi 3:8.***

These Prophets would have made poor royal chaplains if those who dwell in kings' houses have to use smooth speech. Malachi here charges the people with robbery and with the very worst form of it, namely, sacrilege. He speaks for the Lord and says, “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me.” It ill becomes the messengers of Heaven to be the flatterers of rebels. If they should descend to such baseness, they might well expect that their Maker would take them away. The Lord sends His servants to speak the Truth in all its plainness, to denounce sin with all fidelity and to publish God's sentence of condemnation against those who continue in their iniquity. Men's souls are to be dealt with honestly and, if need be, sternly. God's Truth is to be handled with vigorous plainness, for the Lord has said, “He that has My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully.”

Yet notice that Malachi constantly mixes promises with threats and while he is like a sharp two-edged sword against the evil of the people, he is as the balm of Gilead to those who feel their disease of sin and desire to be healed of it. Between the peals of thundering warning there are silver showers of gracious encouragement! He has tempest for sin but peace for those who confess it. Almost the next verse after our text is, “Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house and prove Me now herewith, says the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

Faithful ministries have in them a blending of the Law to drive with the Gospel to draw. Brothers, we must use the Law for its ordained purpose. If we omit the discovery and denunciation of evil, we have neglected a very essential part of our duty, for if men are not convinced of sin, how will they desire pardon? If conscience is not awakened, to what can we address ourselves? It is in vain to bring forth the promises, for the promises are no more sweet to the self-righteous than bread to a man filled with dainties. What cares a man for justification by faith who has the conceit that he is already justified by his own acts? Only those who feel their wounds will plead for heavenly surgery. I pray that I may so preach this morning that while I shall not be harsh in spirit, I may bear hard upon those spirits which are resting in their own innocence! I wish so to speak that we shall, all of us, see our own shortcomings so as to be startled into confession and prayer and led humbly to trust in the great Sacrifice!

It is a very serious charge which the Prophet brings in the text—he calls men thieves and robbers. He charges the whole *nation* with robbing God. We ought seriously to consider a charge so serious and, especially since at this day it may lie against ourselves. We shall come to this consideration, noticing in the text *astonishment indicated*: “Will a man rob God?” The Prophet asks in amazement, as if such a thing could not be. Secondly, we shall spend a little time in pressing home the solemn charge. This will come under the head of *confession assisted*. We shall mention, in detail, certain forms which this robbery may take in order that we may search our own conduct and see whether we are guilty of the crime. If guilty, may we be moved to repentance of the sin and faith in the glorious Sin-Bearer through whom we may be pardoned, even though guilty of treason against the King of kings!

Lastly, we shall help the penitent to the right way under the head of *repentance directed*. If we have robbed God, though the crime is, in itself, most terrible, it is not beyond the reach of mercy. There is forgiveness with God for this, also, for the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, cleanses us from all sin. I shall speak about the way by which forgiveness may be obtained. Oh, for the Holy Spirit to guide mind and heart and tongue in this solemn matter!

I. First, then, in the text there is ASTONISHMENT INDICATED—“Will a man rob God?” The question is asked as if it were improbable, if not impossible. A man, an insignificant creature, dependent upon his God for the breath whereby he lives—will he rob God—the good, the just, the great and terrible One who can crush him in a moment? “Will *a man* rob God?”

In the first place, the astonishment arises from the fact that *the action is altogether unnatural*. It is illogical and self-condemnatory. If we have a God, how dare we rob Him? Look at the heathen—they must have a God—and since they know no better god, the heathen make to themselves gods of wood, of stone or of clay. When they have made these false gods they pay them homage as if, indeed, they were gods! For them they build temples, altars and shrines. Nations in the olden times had no banks, but treasures deposited in temples were safe from robbery. It was not supposed that a thief would break into a temple—to do so was a flagrant crime. There was an awe upon the minds of men which rendered it an audacious felony to rob their deities, false though they were! Men who would have plundered palaces, kept back from the temple of Jupiter, or Minerva, or Diana! No man would rob even an image which he thought to be a god.

If the *heathen* would not rob their gods, shall we dare to do so who have so much light as to the one living and true God? Will men who profess and call themselves Christians venture upon a profanity from which the heathen retreated with a shudder? Even Goths and Vandals, in the days of their invasions of civilization, have been known to stand back at the door of a Church when the minister of Christ has come forward to protest against its plunder. If the fierce heathen learned to respect the holy place, surely it will be a high felony if we, knowing the true God, dare to break in upon the sacred enclosure of His honor and rob Him of His

Glory which is His spiritual treasure! To rob God is a superfluity of naughtiness, an extravagance of crime, an excess of presumptuous provocation! Can man be guilty of it? “Will a man rob God?”

In the next place, to rob God *is terribly daring*. If the thief robs his fellow man, who is his equal, he has cause to fear the law—he should reckon upon being searched out by vigilance and punished by justice. But what are the police and the magistrates and the judges of this lower sphere compared with the Judge of all the earth? “Will a man rob God?” The crime is the more audacious because done in God’s Presence. If the robber could go behind the Lord’s back to rob Him, his insolence would not be so manifest—but since the Lord’s eyes are everywhere present, the offense is rank and impudent! The worst of thieves will not often steal from us to our face—robbery is done in the dark, or on the sly, or by a cunning trick. But since no place is behind the back of God and there is no spot where His eyes are not observant—when a man robs God—he does it before His face!

“Will a man rob God?” What? God, whose eyes are fixed upon him? Will he thus defy his Maker? We lift up our hands in amazement that such a crime should be even conceived, much less committed! Yet, before I have done this morning, I shall have to show that many of us, in different ways, have been guilty of this audacious crime. “Will a man rob God?”

Furthermore, *it is shamefully ungrateful!* God has made us and not we ourselves, therefore we are bound to serve Him and every righteous instinct forbids our robbing Him. Shall a creature injure its Creator? If we live, it is by His forbearance. “Will a man rob God” who spares him? If saved, it must be by His Divine redemption—will a man rob his Redeemer? If provided with food for the body, it must be by God’s daily bounty—will a man rob his constant Benefactor? O Preserver of men, will men rob You? Believers in the Lord Jesus, God is your Father and from you this crime would have a sevenfold heinousness! Will a man rob his own Father? Can it be that one in whose heart there pulses the life of God would be guilty of such an infamy as to rob God? I fear it is so, but in such a case it is ingratitude of so black a type as to be well-near incredible. Ingratitude in every land and in every age has been abhorred of just men. It is a fiendish vice. It is at once contemptible and unendurable—we not only despise, but hate it. Every voice hoots down ingratitude. Yet when a man robs God, it is *ingratitude* written in capital letters—ingratitude that will sink the soul into the lowest Hell. “Will a man rob God?” The Lord deliver us from conduct so base!

It is senselessly injurious to the man himself. To rob God is to plunder ourselves. The man who lives for God does, indeed, and of truth, in the highest sense, live to his own happiness. He that robs God of himself robs himself of God and to lose God is to miss our highest good. To rob God is to waste our own substance, yes, to write one’s own death-warrant. Belshazzar takes from Jehovah the holy vessels and drinks wine from them at his drunken banquet. And it is written, “That night was Belshazzar slain.” When a man robs God by withholding more than is meet from the

poor, it tends to poverty. None rob God and really prosper. There are those who waste their substance upon their own lusts and so rob God—but their profligacy tends to disease, sadness of heart and eternal ruin.

When a man robs God he is despoiling his own estate. Every penny that is withheld from God's treasury is put into a bag that is full of holes. Such gain impoverishes. He that *serves* God brings a blessing upon himself and his posterity—he that robs God should listen to the words which follow my text: "You are cursed with a curse: for you have robbed Me." Because of this comes the devourer which swallows up the estate, the waster that eats up the increase of the field and the destroyer which shipwrecks the result of commerce. If a man knew that when he robbed God he was cutting the throat of his own happiness—burying in a wretched sepulcher his peace for the present and his hope for the future—surely he would pause before he laid his hand upon the Lord's heritage! In the sight of the curse that goes with the injustice, "Will a man rob God?"

Once more—"Will a man rob God" *when he is so certain of punishment?* A man who is a thief hopes to escape, for human search can be baffled. If he were sure that he would be taken, tried and condemned, the burglar would not break into the house—but he hopes by dexterity to evade, or by false statements to escape from the hand of the law—and therefore he ventures upon the crime. Now, no man can hope to escape when he robs God. O Robber, where will you go? In what secret place will you hide yourself? It was said of a Roman emperor, when Rome was at its highest power, that for him the whole world was but one great jail in which all who offended Caesar were prisoners. Wherever an offender fled, the Roman law would reach him. For him there was no foreign land which could protect him in exile, no distant country in which he could live unseen. Once obnoxious to Caesar, he was a doomed man.

And where, O Rebel against God, can you go? If you should mount to Heaven, there He reigns in splendor! If you should dive to Hell, there He rules in terror! Far off upon the sea His hand would reach you. Though your ship should fly before the tempest, He would outstrip you. Darkness affords no concealment and the grave no shelter. God is everywhere and His justice finds out His enemies. Thus says the Lord, "Though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out from there. And though they are hid from My sight in the bottom of the sea, there will I command the serpent and he shall bite them."

"Will a man rob God" when He thus involves Himself in sure detection and punishment? Yes, the robber of God is already detected! God has seen him in the act! The witness against him is unerring. "Will a man rob God?" How can he be so foolhardy? Will he stretch out his hand against God and strengthen himself against the Almighty? Let him be wise and no more dream of robbing the Infinite One. Put all these things together and I think you will share the Prophet's astonishment at the crime of robbing God—and you will earnestly pray, "God grant that we may never be guilty of such wickedness." We hope we have been kept from the worst forms of this sin, for we regard it with abhorrence, as the deadliest of evils.

II. And now, secondly, I am coming to closer quarters with you than under the first head. Now we occupy ourselves with CONFESSIO ASSISTED. I would aid my hearers in examining their lives and hearts, holding a candle for conscience. I will mention, first, *common forms of this robbery*. Here are some of them. Many men, throughout a life which has been prolonged by God's forbearance, have never given to God even the semblance of worship. Neither in their hearts, nor in private prayer, nor in their families have they paid worship to the Lord. They have never once set up an altar in their family, nor called upon the name of the Lord.

It may be there are men and women here who are parents and heads of households and yet after 30, 40, 50 or more years they have never rendered unto God the glory due unto His name. Never have they sung His praises with delight, nor offered prayer in humility. The holy Name has never been on their lips except in carelessness or profanity. Do I speak too roughly when I take such a person by the hand and say to him, "You have robbed God throughout your whole life"? He made you but He has had nothing from you. He has fed you day by day and in His hands your breath is, but you have done Him no service. If a man buys a cow, he counts upon its milk. If he keeps a horse, he looks for its labor. If he owns a dog, he expects it to come to his whistle. Will God make you, feed you, keep you in life and bless you—and is He to have no return? "Will a man rob God?"

Many of you think if you maintain your families, pay your debts and live soberly, all is done that you need think about. God is nowhere and nothing to you. As far as you can do so you have put God out of the world—you live as if there were no God. My Friend, this cannot be right. This injustice to the greatest and the best of Beings—this lack of thought of Him who daily thinks of you, must be wrong! Bow your head in shame and confess your fault at once! Many are in the habit of robbing God in another way. When God prospers them and things go well with them, you may hear them exclaim, "I am a lucky fellow! Bless my lucky stars!" By speeches of this sort they rob God of the thanks they owe Him.

It is silly and wicked to talk about a fictitious power called fortune, or good luck! Though the hand of God is distinctly to be seen in the prosperity which men enjoy, they refuse to see it and talk of chance! God forgive you! You are robbing Him of His praise. Others, when they prosper in the world, pay homage to themselves, their industry, their prudence or their business tact. Self-made men they call themselves. Self-made men are, as a rule, very badly made—it would be a great mercy if they could be broken up and made anew in Christ Jesus. But when a man begins to brag and boast of what he has gathered by his own genius, he robs God of the honor due to His goodness. Look at Nebuchadnezzar—he walks through his great city—he marks the broad walls of Babylon and admires the hanging gardens, bearing forests high in the air and he exclaims, "Behold this great Babylon which I have built!"

A few weeks after, as a maniac, he was eating grass with oxen, having been driven from the dwellings of men. When his hair had grown like ea-

gles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws, *then* he knew how soon the glorious Lord of Heaven and earth can lay the mighty monarch level with the beasts. *Then* he humbled himself and blessed the Most High! Then he praised and honored Him that lives forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion! I do not wish that you should be bereft of your wits, but you may be. Perhaps, if your best reason returned, even that which pride has, for awhile, driven away, it might serve the purpose I desire—for you to remember that it is God that gives you power to get wealth. Prosperity, however much it may come by your own industry, is, nevertheless—when you get to the bottom of it—to be ascribed to the great favor of God who permits you to enjoy health and strength—to exercise your industry and to carry out your undertakings. By forgetfulness of the fountain of all blessings, a man robs God.

I must add here that even men who, in their hearts, fear the Lord, may be guilty of this sin. If the Lord has seen fit to make you useful, it will be horrible if you take the praise of it to yourself. It is very easy for the preacher, when his congregation is large, to think, "This is due to my eloquence." And when there are conversions he may be wicked enough to whisper to himself, "This is due to my fidelity." Ah, me! Shall we sacrifice to our own net because it is full of fish? Shall the axe that fells the tree glorify itself against the hand that uses it? The Lord grant we may never fall into this sin! Are you seeking to win the souls of your children for Christ? Yet maybe you do not gather large classes, nor see many conversions. May it not be because the Lord could not trust you with great success? Some workers must not succeed for it would be at the cost of their souls—they would take the glory to themselves and so rob God.

I knew a man whom God greatly blessed in a certain place, so that his preaching turned it upside down. He built a large house of prayer and filled it with eager hearers. There was such a stir as had not been known before. He was a successful soul-winner, *and he knew it*. Alas, he knew it and you could see that he knew it! He was a man of remarkable ability as a speaker, *and he knew it*. He was eminent for influence and his speech and bearing betrayed that eminence. Where is he now? I cannot tell you. But there came a sudden stop to usefulness—a foolish action—and the man became an affliction to the gracious. If we sit up for masters, instead of being obedient servants, we shall be ordered on foreign service and shall no more see the King's face. Alas, our robbery of God by assuming honor for ourselves may prove that the root of the matter was never in us and that our spiritual power was only lent to us, as it was to Judas, but we were never children of the kingdom. "Will a man rob God?" Ah, me, how common are these offenses! The Lord preserve us from them!

Now I will mention *doctrinal forms* of this evil. "Will a man rob God?" Oh, my Friends, how many in these evil days rob God in this fashion! Some deny the godhead of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I know no greater robbery than to take away from the Ever-Blessed Son of God His right to be regarded as equal with God. To think of the eternal Word as only the creature of a day is base robbery! To regard Him whose name is

Emmanuel, “God with us,” as a mere *teacher* or example, but not, “very God of very God,” is treason! If any man here has so robbed the Christ of God, the Lord have mercy upon him.

“Will a man rob God?” Some rob the Holy Spirit of His Personality. He is spoken of by them as an *influence*, but not as true God. He is spoken of as, “*It*,” instead of, “*He*.” And He is not worshipped as one Person of the blessed Trinity in Unity. Too many practically ignore Him and preach as if they could do without His aid. Thus they rob Him of His true position in reference to the things of God. O Friends, beware of robbing God the Holy Spirit, for this is to tread on tender ground! It is possible, also, to rob the Divine Father. In preaching the sacrifice of Christ it is possible to extol the Son at the expense of the Father. It will never do to make it appear that Jesus died to make the Father merciful. God the Ever-Blessed, the first Person of the sacred Trinity, is Love and therefore He gave His Son to die for men.

We are to worship the Son even as we worship the Father! To magnify the love of the Son above the love of the Father would be to rob God! May none of us dishonor any one Person of the sacred Three. Concerning each Divine Person let us sing—

***“Then let us adore, and give Him His right,
All glory and power, and wisdom and might;
All honor and blessing, with angels above,
And thanks never-ceasing, for infinite love.”***

Though we understand not the mystery of the Trinity, let us believe and worship and so escape the sin of robbing God. Beloved, some yield to the temptation to limit the legal claims of God. They rob Him of His rights under His just and righteous Law. It has been taught by certain divines that God does not require from us perfect obedience to His Law, but only asks *sincere* obedience. If we go as far as we can, that will suffice—so they tell us. This is not true, for the Law of the Lord stands fast forever, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.”

To tone down the demands of this perfect Law and absolve men from their duty to obey every portion of it is to rob God and to teach others to do so. Although by reason of our sinfulness we cannot render perfect obedience, God is not to be blamed for that and neither is He to lose His due. If I cannot pay, yet the debt remains. I am under obligation to the Law to keep it. It is written, “Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.” It is ours to come before God saying, “The Law is holy and just and good but I am carnal, sold under sin.” If we do not consent unto the Law, that it is good, we rob God of His goodness, wisdom and justice in making such a Law.

Not a few rob God, also, by rebelling against His Sovereignty. I have known men to bite their lip and grind their teeth in rage when I have been preaching the Sovereignty of God. Yet it is true and who is he that replies against God? He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. He will

have compassion on whom He will have compassion. He demands, "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own?" Men seem to think that God is under obligation to grant salvation to guilty men—that if he saves one He must save all. They talk about rights as if any man had any right before the Throne of God except the right to be punished for his sin! Mercy can only be shown to the guilty on the ground of the royal prerogative. It must be the free act of God's Grace, done at His own good pleasure if any guilty man is saved from death.

The doctrinaires of today will allow a god, but he must not be King—that is to say, they choose a god who is no god and rather the servant than the ruler of men! We, however, declare on God's behalf, that "it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy"—and at the sound of this doctrine they stamp their feet with rage! They would rob God of His crown and leave Him neither throne nor will. This will not do for me! My heart delights to say, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him." Whatever is *His* pleasure shall by *my* pleasure. Even if the Lord condemns me, I cannot say that He is unjust. But if He has mercy upon me, I must ascribe it wholly to His free and Sovereign Grace! Rob not God of His Sovereignty but rejoice that the Lord reigns and does as He wills.

I fear that many rob God of the Glory of his Free Grace which is akin to His Divine Sovereignty and is one of the brightest jewels of His crown. God saves not according to merit, but according to mercy. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life." Salvation is freely given, not because man merits it, but because Jehovah wills it. All salvation is of Divine Grace and not of works. I say it is of *Free Grace* and it is muttered that the expression is a tautology. I know it is—but we want to be understood. Salvation comes because God wills to save. Grace is given to the most unworthy of the sons of men to show that it is of Grace and not of debt!

But, ah, these knaves—they drag in human goodness or strength by the heels if they cannot get it in any other way! To spoil the freeness of Sovereign Grace and so to rob God of Glory is the ambition of many a preacher! One drop of human merit put into a sea of Free Grace preaching will spoil it all. "If by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it is of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work." Stand to it, Brothers and Sisters, that by GRACE we are saved! In these evil days stand boldly out and protest against every Gospel that conceals Sovereign Grace as the fountain of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Now I will come closer home to certain of you, while I mention *practical forms* of this robbery of God. With too many God is robbed of that part of time which belongs to Him. And what part of time does He claim? One day in seven! He has given six days to us to use for our business, but He has reserved one day in seven for Himself and this He has done for our good. Christ our Lord has taken away whatever of bondage there was about the Sabbath Law, as interpreted by the Jewish Rabbis. And by example and

by speech He has told us that acts of necessity, acts of mercy and acts of piety are allowable on Sunday. The bitter observance of the Sabbath was opposed by our Lord, that He might bring to us the true rest.

Yet, in many ways, men are conspiring to rob God of the day which He has hallowed. The little which remains of sacredness about this day is now being threatened to our national injury. Give up the Sabbath and you reduce the nation to slavery. A week without a Sabbath is perpetual bondage. This break of a day's rest makes it possible for the toiling man to live. Alas, at this day the very highest in the land are setting the example of disregarding the sanctity of the Lord's-Day! I grieve to have to say it of one who has been otherwise regarded, but so it is, that, by *royal example*, the day is turned from its holy purpose. It is not only from the ribald and the profane that our Christian Sabbath is in danger, but from those whose example has weight about it because of the honor justly paid to long years of virtue. God forgive the error and cause it to cease!

Brothers and Sisters, we must, to the utmost of our power, conserve for God His holy day or we shall be guilty of robbing Him! Very sincerely did we sing just now—

***“Welcome, sweet day of rest,
That saw the Lord arise;
Welcome to this reviving breast,
And these rejoicing eyes.”***

All time is the Lord's due and all the life of man. Let us not rob Him of our youth. He says to the young, “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth.” Young man, do not rob God of your prime! Do not give to the world and to sin the morning of your days while the dew of youth is upon you. Rob not God of your early manhood but give Him your flower in its bud. Every day and all the day—and the whole of life belongs to God. Do not let us waste a minute in that which would provoke Him to anger, but let Him have each moment, for He prepares for us an eternity of reward.

“Will a man rob God?” Many rob God by not giving Him their hearts. “My son,” said He, “give Me your heart.” He claims you—give Him yourself. He made you and He alone can save you—give Him yourself. Will a man rob God? I pray you, do not! Render to the Lord your spirit, soul and body. Have you a faculty which you only use for self? You are robbing God—for the talent, the strength, the life you have are all His. These are the pounds which you must put out to interest for your Lord. If even your single pound is not used for Him, you will be found guilty of unfaithfulness in your stewardship.

Those may be said to rob God who have never borne testimony to the Grace which they believe they have received. You have been saved but you have never told anybody of the wondrous blessing—no, not your own wife! You have been converted—at least you hope so—but you have never confessed it, even to your children! Are you not robbing God of the revenue of Glory which would come to Him through the testimony which you are sent into the world to bear? If all Christians were dumb as you are, God would have no witness left on the face of the earth! Will men rob God of the con-

firmation of His Word which a gracious experience furnishes? You have influence—will you rob God of this, also? We have all some influence, even as we all cast a shadow as we walk in the sun! Are you using your influence for God? If not, you are robbing Him of a great gift which He meant you to use for the glory of His name and the extension of His kingdom.

Perhaps you have more than influence—you have power—for you are the head of a family and you can command your household and your children after you. Are you leading servants and children in a wrong road? You are the Lord-Lieutenant in your own little sphere and are you using that power in a rebellious manner? Do you teach others to do what you, yourself, know to be evil? Alas, you rob God! Will you continue to rob God? In making you a father, a mother, an employer of labor and so forth, the Lord has entrusted you with a measure of His own power—will you use it against your Sovereign Lord? Are you a leader in society? Will you rob God? Are you a senator? Will you go into the Parliament House to vote for Acts which will be prejudicial to morals and religion? Are you a magistrate and will you wink at evil? Will you tolerate the indecencies and immoralities of our streets? Shall justice be the servant of vice? God forgive men who thus rob God!

Will men rob God of His portion of their wealth? I must not leave this out, for it is necessary to speak out in the matter of consecration of property. How many professors of religion are robbing God? If we are Christians, we profess that all we have belongs to God. You do not dispute that statement. Well, then, when a man hoards up all he can scrape together—is he not robbing God? When a man dies enormously rich, as many professing Christians have done, must they not have robbed God? Can it be said that they have discharged their stewardship aright when they have kept their Master's property for themselves? It is better for a Christian to die comparatively poor than enormously rich! Rich wills may go to show that the deceased did not use his pounds for his Lord, but for himself.

Do not many Christians fail to see that God is the first owner of their possessions? They dribble out a little to His cause but is there not robbery in that which is withheld? They could not have the face to deny something and, as compared with their neighbors, they are even generous—but as compared with their obligations to God, have they not robbed Him? If we spend upon ourselves beyond bounds. If we lay out upon luxury more than is necessary. If we are superabundantly self-indulgent and are not consecrating a fair proportion of our substance to the cause of God and the help of the poor, we are assuredly robbing the Most High! I fear that many a wealthy man on his dying bed will find that gold makes a hard pillow. He will endure many a pang of conscience if he has seen missions languish, the Church of God impeded in her efforts and a thousand good efforts nipped in the bud from lack of money which he might have given. The work of the Lord would never go a-begging if Believers were but commonly honest to their Redeemer's cause. If I plead like this, somebody raises an objection but I cannot help it. I seek nothing for myself—but I urge my Master's claims.

“Will a man rob God?” I close this help to confession which, I think, must have come home to many of you, when I say that with certain persons there are *peculiar forms* of this evil. When yonder friend lay sick and thought himself at death’s door, he said, “O Lord, raise me up!” And then he vowed unto the Lord to devote a portion of his means to holy purposes. If he has not kept that sacred promise, I put the question to him with emphasis, “Will a man rob God?” Many years ago there came a friend to this place in fearful anxiety of mind. He told me that he had years before made a vow to give to God a very considerable amount but he had delayed payment. The result, at last, was that his conscience troubled him and he could get no rest either day or night. He was greatly relieved when he handed over the amount to the Orphanage and College and other works. Certainly he found it that day more blessed to give than to receive!

When I thanked him for such large help, he said, vehemently, “Do not thank me. I thank *you* for taking the trouble to use this money for the Lord. It is a great relief to me to be rid of this amount, for I fear I have not acted honestly towards the Lord my God.” Vow slowly, pay promptly! Do not hasten to say, “I will do this or that”—but when you have once said it, see that you *do* it and do it to the fullest. Be not like Ananias and Sapphira, who kept back part of the price of the land which they professed to give to the Lord and to His Church. Never let us boast that we have done this or that for the Lord if we have not really done so to the letter—for in so doing we shall stand on hazardous ground. I leave the matter with God and your own consciences, only asking once more the solemn question, “Will a man rob God?”

III. Very briefly I would conclude with REPENTANCE DIRECTED. If any here are convicted by their own conscience, I ask them not to go out as they did who were convicted by our Lord, but I do ask that while we remain here we may *feel a deep sense of shame* because of our shortcomings towards God. If in any one of the ways mentioned we have robbed God, may confusion cover us. You that cannot say you have served Him at all, repent of such a robbery of God! You strong men and lovely women who are sitting here—who gave you your strength and beauty? Have you all your lives lived for self? What? No thought of God? Your Creator you have forgotten—He to whom you rightly belong you have practically denied. Confess the wrong! Humble yourself about it and may God the Holy Spirit work a sound conviction which shall lead you to real penitence.

Next, as much as lies in you, *make restitution*. See how the Prophet put it. “Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house.” God requires that of you who have defrauded Him. You are not to say, “I am sorry,” and then go on in the same unrighteous manner. If you have wronged any man, never rest till you have made restitution to him. If in business, by petty pilfering or deception, you have dishonestly profited to the injury of another, set it right. You cannot expect to have peace in your conscience till you have, to the utmost of your power, rectified the wrong. As to the Lord Himself, if you have robbed Him, attend to that business. “Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse.” Support His

cause. Pay your fair proportion of the expenses of His house and do not withhold that which is due.

Above all things, *behold the great Maker of restitution*. There is One who said, "I restored that which I took not away." The Lord Jesus, alone, can put away the guilt of your robberies of God! He gave Himself to remove sin. Yes, He gave Himself up to the stroke of the sword of Justice that sinners might not perish. He died between two thieves, for there are many robbers of God in the land. The justice of God is appeased for your robberies by the death of Jesus. Look to God without fear! Look to Him and be saved! He is willing freely to forgive all your trespasses for Jesus' sake. Only trust Him—only trust Him *now* and He will set you at liberty from the curse which follows all who rob God. Believe and your sin is gone—

***"Sunk as in a shoreless flood,
Drowned in the Redeemer's precious blood."***

Lastly, if you are saved, say in your soul, "The past is forgiven and my fearful robberies of God are pardoned. Therefore *I will rob Him no more*. By God's help it shall be my delight to spend and be spent for Him and—

***"If I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I would give Him all."***

I plead for perfect consecration—anything short of that is robbery of God! To live alone for Him who loved you and gave Himself for you is your debt to God—anything short of that is robbery of God. Chosen before all worlds, will you not be the Lord's? Adopted into the family of Grace, will you not serve your heavenly Father? Made an heir of God, joint heir with Jesus Christ, will you not glorify Him who has raised you to this dignity? Ordained to everlasting bliss, a crown awaiting your brow, a palm of victory prepared for your hand, a mansion in Glory made ready for you by your glorious Forerunner—will you not glorify your God?

Need I plead with you? No, I will not! As you love Christ who has loved you, I beseech you, present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God which is your reasonable service. Be not so unreasonable as to refuse your life, your all for His dear sake. Amen.

***PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Malachi 2:17; 3.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—907, 605, 576.***

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PROVING GOD

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A SERMON
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ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 19, 1856.

“Prove Me now.”
Malachi 3:10.

IT was my pleasure and my privilege, some time ago, to address you from the whole of this verse—“Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in your house, and prove Me now herewith, says the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

If I rightly remember, we had at that time enough room, but very soon afterwards, when we strove to serve our God more, He did really pour us out such a blessing that we had not room to receive it! Then we enlarged this house—still the blessing flowed so copiously that there was no room to receive it and I might have preached again from the same text, to remind you again of the promise. This morning, feeling that we are about to enter on a new enterprise to God's honor and Glory, I thought I would endeavor to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, for which purpose I select such a text as this, “Prove Me now.”

According to the laws of our country, no man can be condemned until his guilt is proved. It were well if we all carried out the same justice toward God which we expect from our fellow men, but how frequently will men condemn the acts of their God as being hard and unkind! They do not *say* so—they dare not—they scarcely admit that they *think* so, but there is a kind of lurking imagination hardly amounting to a deliberate thought which leads them to fear that God has forgotten to be gracious and will no longer be mindful of them. Let us never, my Friends, think harshly of our God till we can prove something against Him. He says to all His unbelieving children who are doubtful of His goodness and His Grace, “Prove Me now. Have you anything against Me? Can you prove anything that will be dishonorable to Me? Wherein have I ever broken My promise? In what have I ever failed to fulfill My word? Ah, you cannot say that. Prove Me now, if you have anything against Me—if you can say anything against My honor—if you have hitherto not received answers to prayer and blessings according to promise. Set me down as false, I beseech you, until you have so proved Me.”

Moreover, not only is it unjust to think ill of anyone until we can prove something against him, but it is extremely unwise to be always

suspicious of our fellow creatures. Though there is much folly in being over credulous, I question if there is not far more in being over suspicious. He who believes every man will soon be bitten, but he who suspects every man will not only be bitten, but devoured! He who lives in perpetual distrust of his fellow creatures cannot be happy—he has defrauded himself of peace and happiness—and assumed a position in which he cannot enjoy the sweets of friendship or affection. I would rather be too credulous towards my fellow creatures than too suspicious. I had rather they should impose upon me by making me believe them better than they are, than that I should impose upon them by thinking them worse than they are. It is better to be sometimes cheated than that we should cheat others—and it is cheating others to suspect those on whose characters there rests no suspicion. We acknowledge such morality among men, but we act not so towards God—we believe any liar sooner than we believe Him! When we are in trial and trouble, we believe the devil when he says God will forsake us. The devil, who has been a liar from the beginning, we credit—but if our God promises anything, we say, “Surely this is too good to be true.” And we doubt the fulfillment because it is not brought to pass exactly at the time and in the way we anticipate! Let us never harbor such suspicions of our God. If we say in our haste, “All men are liars,” let us preserve this one Truth of God, “God cannot lie.” His counsel is immutable and He has confirmed it by an oath, “that we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” in Christ Jesus. Let not our faith, then, dally with fear. Let us rather seek Grace—that we may confidently believe and assuredly rely on the words which the lips of God speak. “‘Prove Me now,’ if any of you are suspicious of My Word. If you think My Grace is not sweet, taste and see that the Lord is gracious. If you think that I am not a rock and that My work is not perfect, come now, tread upon the rock and see if it is not firm—build on the rock and see if it is not solid. If you think My arm shortened that I cannot save, come and ask and I will stretch it out to defend you. If you think that My ear is heavy that I cannot hear, come and try it—call upon Me and I will answer you. If you are suspicious, make proof of My promises, so shall your suspicions be removed. But, oh, doubt Me not until you have found Me unworthy of trust! ‘Prove Me now.’”

In these words I find *a fact couched, a challenge given, a time mentioned, and an argument suggested.* Such are the four points I propose to consider this morning.

I. First, then, we have THE FACT that God allows Himself to be proved—“Prove Me now.”

In meditating on this subject, it has occurred to me that all the works of Creation are proofs of God—they evidence His eternal power and Godhead. But inasmuch as He is not only the Creator, but the Sustainer of them all, they make continual proof of Him, His goodness, His faithfulness and His care. I think when God launched the sun from His hand and sent it on its course, He said, “Prove Me now; see, O sun, if I

do not uphold you till you have done your work and finished your career. You may rejoice 'as a strong man to run a race,' but while you fulfill your circuits, and nothing is hid from your heat, you shall prove My Glory and shed light upon My handiwork." When the Almighty whirled the earth in space, I think He said, "Prove Me now, O 'seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night,' refreshing you with incessant Providences." And to each creature He made, I can almost think the Almighty said, "Prove Me now. Tiny gnat, you are about to dance in the sunshine—you shall prove My goodness. Huge leviathan, you shall stir up the deep and make it frothy—go forth and prove My power. You creatures whom I have endowed with various instincts, wait on Me—I will give you your meat in due season. And you, you mighty thunder and you swift lightning, go teach the world reverence and show forth My Omnipotence." Thus, I think, all God's creatures are not merely proofs of His existence, but proofs of His manifold wisdom, His loving kindness and His Grace! The meanest and the mightiest of His created works, each and all, in some degree prove His love and teach us how marvelous is His Nature. But He has given to man this high prerogative above all the works of His hands, that he alone should make designed and intelligent proof. The things of earth prove God—the cattle on a thousand hills low forth His honor and the very lions roar His praise! Yet they do it not with intent, judgment and will—and although the sun proves the majesty and the might of its Master, yet the sun has neither mind nor thought and it is not its intention to glorify God. They do but prove Him unintentionally. But the saint does it *intentionally*.

It is a great fact, Beloved, that *God will have all His children to be proofs of the various attributes of His Nature*. I do not think any one of the children of God proves all of God, but that they are all proving different parts of His one grand Character so that when the whole history of Providence shall be written and the lives of all the saints shall be recorded, the title of this book will be, "Proofs of God." There will be one compendious proof that He is God and changes not—that with Him there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." You will remember how one saint peculiarly proved the long-suffering of God in that he was permitted to pursue his career to the utmost verge of destruction—and while he hung on a cross, the patience that had borne with him so long, brought salvation to him at last! He was "in the article of death," falling into the Pit, when Sovereign Grace broke the fall, everlasting arms caught his soul and Jesus Himself conducted him to Paradise! Then again, you will remember another saint who plunged into a thousand sins and indulged in the foulest lust—but she was brought to Christ! Out of her did He cast seven evil spirits and Mary Magdalene was made to prove the richness of our Savior's pardoning Grace as well as the sweetness of a pardoned sinner's gratitude! It is a fact that the Lord is ready to forgive—and this woman is a great proof of it. There was Job who was tortured with ulcers and made to scrape himself with a potsherd. He proved "that the Lord is full of pity and of tender mercy."

From him we get evidence that God is able to sustain us amidst unparalleled sufferings.

Let me note how Solomon proved the bounty of God. When he asked for wisdom and knowledge, the Lord not only granted his request, but added riches and wealth and honor to his store. And how did Solomon magnify this proof of Divine bounty as he translates the experience of his dream into the counsel of his Proverbs? While he advises us to get wisdom, he assures us that “length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor.” And then, once more, how great a proof of God’s special Providence in maintaining in this world “a remnant according to the election of Grace” we derive from the history of Elijah. There sat the venerable Seer beneath a juniper tree in the lonely desert—a great but sorrowful man—an honored but a dejected Prophet of the Most High. Do you mark him as he comes to Horeb, takes up his lodging in a cave and complains in the awful solitude of his soul, “I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away”? Oh, had his fears been realized, what a blank would earth have been without a saint! But Elijah proved from the mouth of God the impossibility! He learned for our sakes, as well as his own, what a reservation God has made in reasons of direst persecution! It is proved that there shall always be a Church in the world while earth’s old pillars stand!

Nor need we suppose that the testimony of the witnesses is closed. Each of God’s saints is sent into the world to prove some part of the Divine Character. Perhaps I may be one of those who shall live in the valley of ease, having much rest, and hearing sweet birds of promise singing in my ears. The air is calm and balmy, the sheep are feeding round about me and all is still and quiet. Well, then, I shall prove the love of God in sweet communing. Or, perhaps I may be called to stand where the thunderclouds brew, where the lightning plays and tempestuous winds are howling on the mountaintop. Well, then, I am born to prove the power and majesty of our God amidst dangers! He will inspire me with courage! Amidst toils He will make me strong! Perhaps it shall be mine to preserve an unblemished character and so prove the power of sanctifying Grace in not being allowed to backslide from my professed dedication to God. I shall then be a proof of the Omnipotent power of Grace which alone can save from the power as well as the guilt of sin! The divers cases of all the Lord’s family are intended to illustrate different parts of His ways—and in Heaven I think one part of our blest employ will be to read the great book of the experience of all the saints and gather from that book the whole of the Divine Character as having been proved and illustrated! Each Christian is a manifestation and display of some attribute or other of God—a different part may belong to each of us, but when the whole shall be combined, when all the rays of evidence shall be brought, as it were, into one great sun and shine forth with meridian splendor—we shall see in Christian experience a beautiful Revelation of our God!

Let us remember, then, as an important fact, that God intends us to live in this world to prove Him. And let us seek to do so, always endeavoring as much as we can to be finding out and proving the attributes of God. Remember, we have all the promises to prove in our lifetime—and it shall be found, in the Last Great Day, that every one of them has been fulfilled! As the promises are read through now, it may be asked, “Who is a proof of such a promise?” Perhaps the question relates to some promises of almost universal application—and millions of saints will rise and say, “We proved the truth of that.” Or there may be a promise in the Bible that it will seldom fall to the lot of one of God’s children to prove—it is so peculiar and few shall have been able to understand it. But mark, there will be some witnesses to attest it, and all the promises shall be fulfilled in the united experience of the Church. Such, then is the fact—God allows His children to prove Him.

II. And now, secondly, we have here A CHALLENGE GIVEN TO US—“Prove Me now.” “You who have doubted Me, prove Me. You who mistrust Me, prove Me. You who tremble at the enemy, prove Me. You who are afraid you cannot accomplish your work, believe My promise and come and prove Me.”

Now, I must explain this challenge to you, as to the way in which it has to be carried out. There are different sorts of promises given in God’s Word which have to be proved in different ways. In the Bible there are three kinds of promises. In the first class I will place the conditional promises, such as are intended for certain characters—given only to them and then only on certain conditions. There is a second class, referring exclusively to the future—the fulfillment of which does not relate to us at the present time. Then there is a third and most glorious class called absolute promises, which have no conditions whatever, but which graciously supply the requirements that the conditional promises demand.

To begin with *conditional promises*—we cannot prove a conditional promise in the same way as an absolute one. The manner of proving must accord with the character of the promise to be proved. Let me mention, for example, “Ask, and you shall receive.” Here it is quite obvious that I must ask in order to verify the promise. I have a condition to fulfill in order to obtain a benefit. The way to test the faithfulness of the Promiser and the truth of the promise is plainly this—comply with the stipulation. Very different is the promise and equally different the proof, when God says, “I will put My spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes.” Here we have the simple will of the Almighty. Such a promise is to be proved in a very different manner from the fulfillment on our part of a condition—but more of this soon.

In order to prove conditional promises, then, it is necessary for us to fulfill the condition that God has annexed to them. He says, “Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and prove Me now herewith.” No man can prove God, with reference to this promise, till he has brought all the tithes into the storehouse—for it

is, “herewith,” this promise has to be proved. Suppose the Lord says, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.” The only way of proving Him is by calling upon Him in the time of trouble. We may stand as long as we like and say, “God will fulfill that promise.” Yes, that He will, but we must fulfill the condition! And it behooves us to seek Grace of Him to enable us to do so, for we cannot prove such promises unless we fulfill the conditions appended to them. There are many very sweet conditional promises—one of them helped to save my soul at rest, it was this, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” The condition there is, “Look unto Me.” But you cannot prove it unless you look unto Christ! Here is another, “Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” What a blessed promise that is! But then you cannot prove the promise unless you call on the name of the Lord. So that whenever we see the promise to which a condition is attached, if we wish to prove it in our own experience, we must ask of God to give us Grace to fulfill the condition! That is one way of proving God.

But some will say, “Do not these conditions restrict the liberality and graciousness of God’s promises?” Oh, no, Beloved, for first, the conditions are often put to describe the persons to whom the promises are made. Hence, my Brother, when it is written, “He forgets not the cry of the humble,” the promise fits your chastened soul. When the Lord says, “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembles at My Word.” And when He says, “I will satisfy her poor with bread,” you can, some of you, take comfort that the promise finds you in the fit condition to receive the blessing! But again, if the condition is not a state, but a duty, then let it be prayer—He gives the spirit of prayer! Let it be faith—He is the Giver of faith! Let it be meekness—He it is who clothes you with meekness! Thus the conditions serve to commend the promises to God’s own children and to show the bounty of Him who gives “Grace for Grace.”

But then there is *the absolute promise* and that is the largest and best promise of all, for if they were all conditional promises and the conditions rested with us to fulfill, we would all be damned! If there were no absolute promises, there would not be a soul saved! If they were all made to characters and no absolute promise were made that the characters should be given, we would perish, notwithstanding all God’s promises. If He had simply said, “He that believes shall be saved,” we should all be lost, for we could not believe without His Grace. Now, the absolute promise is not to be proved by *doing* anything, but by *believing in it*. All I can do with an absolute promise is to believe it. If I were to try to fulfill a condition, it would not be accepted by God because no condition is appended to that kind of promise. He might well say to me, “If you have fulfilled the condition of another promise, you shall have it, but I have put no condition to this one. I have said, ‘I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My ways; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.’ That is a promise without any condition.” Although the child

of God may have sinned, yet the promise stands good that he shall be brought to know his error, to repent, and be wholly forgiven! Such a promise we can only believe—we cannot fulfill any condition relating to it. We must take it to God and say, “Have You said that Christ ‘shall see of the travail of His soul’? Lord, we believe it. Let Him see of the travail of His soul. Do you say, ‘My Word shall not return unto Me void’? Lord, do as You have said. You have said it, Lord—do it.” Has He said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out”? Then go and say, “Lord, I come now. Do as you said.” On an absolute promise, I can tell you, faith gets good foothold! Conditional promises often cheer the soul, but it is the absolute promise which is the rock that faith delights to stand upon!

Now, beloved Friends, what promise has been laid this day to your hearts? Many of you have one that God gave you when you arose from your beds. I am always sure to have the most happy day when I get a good text in the morning from my Master. When I have had to preach two or three sermons in a day, I have asked Him for a morning portion, and preached from it. And I have asked Him for an evening portion, and preached from it, after meditating on it for my own soul’s comfort—not in the professional style of a regular sermon-maker, but meditating upon it for myself. Such simple food has done more good than if I had been a week in manufacturing a sermon, for it has come warm from my heart just after it has been received in my own conscience and, therefore, it has been well spoken, because well known, well tasted, and well felt! What is your promise, then? Is it a conditional one? Then say, “Lord, I beseech You, enable me to fulfill the condition.” And if the promise is applied to your soul with a condition, He will give you both the condition and the promise, for He never gives by halves. Has He put into your soul, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts”? Then He will give you Grace to forsake your ways and your thoughts too! He will not give you the conditional promise without, in due time, giving you the condition, too.

But have you got an absolute promise laid to your soul? Then you are a happy man! Has God laid to your inmost spirit some of those great and precious promises, such as this, “The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed”? Pause not to ask for conditions—take the promise just as it is! Go on your knees and say, “Lord, You have said it.” Again, has the Lord promised, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you”? Plead it! Or are you in trouble? Search out the suitable promise and say, “You have said, ‘When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.’ I believe you, Lord! I am tried, but you have said I shall have no trial that I am not able to bear. Lord, give me all-sufficient Grace, and make me more than conqueror!” Go and prove God! Be not afraid with any amazement. If He gives you a single word, He means that you should bring it to Him and tell it to Him again—for you know He has said, “I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.” Do, I

beseech you, put the Lord in mind of His own promises and He will most assuredly fulfill them! Here is a challenge to all the redeemed, “Prove Me now.”

III. In the third place, there is A SEASON MENTIONED—“Prove Me now.”

Do you know what is the most perilous time in a Christian’s life? I think I could hit upon it in a moment—“now.” Many persons—I might well near say all Christians—are always most apprehensive of the present hour. Suppose they are in trouble? Though they may have had ten times worse troubles before, they forget all about *them* and, “now,” is the most critical day they ever knew! Or, if they are at ease, they say—

***“Far more the treacherous calm I dread
Than tempests rolling over my head”—***

and they think no position in life more dangerous than “now.” The lions are before them—how great their danger! And when, a little while ago, they lost their roll in the arbor of ease, how dreadful it was then! And when they got to the slippery ground, going downhill, “now” seemed their greatest danger! When they get a little further and Apollyon meets them, “Here,” they say, “is the worst trial of all.” Then comes the Valley of the Shadow of Death and they say, “Now this is the most serious period of my life!” In fact, it is right that we should feel in some degree that “now” is just the time we ought to be guarded. Yesterdays and tomorrows we may leave, but “now” is the time we must be watchful. God never lays tomorrow’s promise on my heart today, because I am not in immediate need of it. The promises are given in the time, in the place and in the manner He has designed and intended they should be fulfilled. But no doubt some of you will sympathize with me when I say that “now” is the time when the Christian thinks he can trust God the least. “Oh,” he says, “if I were in the same state as I was before, I would be happy. I believe that I could have trusted my Master better then, but just now I cannot lay my head so confidently on the Savior’s breast. I remember, when I was sick, how sweet the promises were. I could then say—

***“Sweet to lie passive in His hands,
And know no will but His.”***

But now I am altered. Somehow or other, a languor has come over me. I cannot believe that I am a Christian.” You compare yourself with some Brother and feel quite sure that if you were only like he, you would have faith. Go and speak to that Brother and he will say, “If I were like *you*, I would be better off.” And so they would change experiences, each failing to trust God under his own circumstances. But the Lord is pleased to always give us a word that suits the particular position we may be in—“Prove Me now.”

To allegorize a moment. There is a ship upon the sea. It is the ship which the Lord has launched and which He has said shall come to its desire haven. The sea is smooth. The waves ripple gently and bear the ship steadily along. “Prove Me now,” says the Lord. The mariner stands on the deck and says, “Lord, I thank You that You have given me such smooth sailing as this. But ah, my Master, perhaps this very ease and

comfort may destroy my Grace.” And a Voice says, “Prove Me now, and see if I cannot keep you amidst the storm.” Soon the heavens have gathered blackness, the winds have begun to bluster and the waves lift up their voices while the poor ship is tossed to and fro on the yawning winds. I hear a Voice which says, “Prove Me now.” Look, the ship has been dashed upon the rocks—she has been broken well near in sunder and the mariner sees her hold filling with water, while all his pumps cannot keep her empty! The Voice still cries, “Prove Me now.” Alas, the ship well-near sinks—another wave will be enough to swamp her! It seems as if one more drop will submerge her. Still the Voice cries, “Prove Me now.” And the mariner does prove God—and he is delivered safely from all his distresses. “They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit’s end,” but, “so He brings them unto their desired haven.” Now the ship is scudding merrily along before the winds and, lo, she comes to the verge of the horizon. The mists have gathered round her. Strange phantoms dance to the waves of night—a lurid light flits through the shades and soon the darkness come again. Something broods about the ship that the mariner has never seen before. The water is black beneath his vessel’s prow. The air hangs damp and thick above him. The very sweat is clammy on his face. Fresh fear has got a hold of him that he never felt before. Just then, when he knows not what to do, a Voice cries, “Prove Me now.” And so he does! He cries unto the Lord and is saved!

Ah, dear Friends, I might give you a hundred illustrations. I think this old Bible speaks to me today. I have wielded it in your midst as God’s soldier. This sword of the Spirit has been thrust into many of your hearts and though they were hard as adamant, it has split them in sunder! Some of you have had sturdy spirits broken in pieces by this good old Jerusalem blade. But we shall be gathered together tonight where an unprecedented mass of people will assemble, perhaps, from idle curiosity, to hear God’s Word—and the Voice cries in my ears, “Prove Me now.” Many a man has come, during my ministrations, armed to his very teeth and having on a coat of mail—yet has this tried weapon cut him in two and pierced to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow! “Prove Me now,” says God, “go and prove Me before blasphemers! Go and prove Me before reprobates, before the vilest of the vile and the filthiest of the filthy! Go and prove Me now.” Lift up that life-giving Cross and let it again be exhibited! Into the regions of death go and proclaim the Word of Life! Into the most plague-smitten parts of the city, go and carry the waving censer of the incense of a Savior’s merits and prove, now, whether He is not able to stop the plague and remove the disease!

But what does God say to the Church? “You have proved Me before. You have attempted great things, though some of you were faint-hearted and said, ‘We should not have ventured.’ Others of you had faith and proved Me. I say again, ‘Prove Me now.’” See what God can do just when a cloud is falling on the head of him whom God has raised up to preach to you! Go and prove Him now—see if He will not pour you out such a

blessing as you had not even dreamed of—see if He will not give you a Pentecostal blessing! “Prove Me now.” Why should we be unbelieving? Have we one thing to make us so? We are weak—what of that? Are we not strongest in our God when we are weakest in ourselves? We are fools, it is said—so we are, and we know it—but He makes fools to confound the wise. We are base, but God has chosen the base things of the world. We are unlearned—

“We know no schoolman’s subtle art”—

yet we glory in infirmity when Christ’s power rests upon us. Let them represent us as worse than we are! Let them give us the most odious character that has ever been given to man—we will bless them and wish them good. What though the weapon are a stone, or even the jaw-bone of an ass, if the Lord directs it? “Do you not know,” say some, “what wise men say?” Yes, we do, but we can read their oracles backwards. Their words are the offspring of their wishes. We know who has instructed them and do you shrink from the Truth of God, or do you shrink from His Grace? In either case, you have not the love to your Master that you should have. If you are brave men and true, go on and conquer! Fear not, you shall yet win the day! God’s holy Gospel shall yet shake the earth once more! The banner is lifted up and multitudes are flocking to it—the Pharisees have taken counsel together—the learned stand confounded—the sages are baffled. They know not what to do! The little ones God has made great and he that was despised is exalted. Let us trust Him, then. He will be with us even to the end, for He has said, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

IV. The last division of my subject is AN ARGUMENT and I have already preached on that—“Prove Me now.”

Why should we prove God? Because, Beloved, *it will glorify Him if we do*. Nothing glorifies God more than proving Him. When a poor hungry child of God, without a crust in the cupboard, says, “Lord, You have said that bread shall be given me and water shall be sure. I will prove You”—more Glory is given to God by that simple proof of Him than by the hallelujahs of the archangels! When some poor despairing sinner who has been fluttering round the Word, in hopes that he may—

**“Light on some sweet promise there,
Some sure defense against despair”—**

when such an one gives credence to God’s promise in the very teeth of evidence against him, staggering not at the promise through unbelief, then he glorifies God! If you are, this morning, in your own apprehension an almost damned sinner, and you feel yourself to be the vilest of all—if you will believe this, that Christ loves you and that Christ came to save you, sinner as you are—you will glorify God as much by doing that as you will be able to do when your fingers shall sweep across the string of the golden harps of Paradise! We glorify God by proving Him. Try God. This is the way to bring out the glorious points of the Christian character. It is in being singularly qualified for the duties of our holy Christian warfare, in being singularly courageous and singularly ready

with the martyr-spirit, to imperil ourselves for His service, that we may bring glory to God! God says, "Prove Me now." Saint, will you rob Him of His honor? Will you not do that which shall crown Him, in the estimation of the world, with many more crowns? Oh, prove Him, for by so doing you will glorify His name!

Prove Him again, for *you have proved Him before*. Can you not remember that you were brought very low and yet you can say, "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles"? What? Will you not prove Him again? Mind you not the goodness you have proved? When you said, "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well near slipped," did He not support you so that you could say with the Psalmist, "Nevertheless I am continually with you: you have held me by my right hand"? Has your foot slipped? Can you not thus far witness to His mercy? Then trust in it to still hold you up!

Again, accept this challenge! Prove God's Word, as He has called you to do, and *how much blessing it will give to yourself!* Beloved Brothers and Sisters, we endure 10 times as much anxiety in this world as we need because we confide not in Divine promises half as much as we might. If we were to live more on God's promises, and less on creature feelings, we would be happier men and women, all of us! Could we live always in faith on the promises, the shafts of the enemy could never reach us. Let us constantly, then, seek to prove Him! How much good Mr. Muller has done by proving God! He is called by God to a special work. What does he do? He builds an orphan asylum and trusts to God. He has no regular income, but he says, "I will prove to the world that God hears prayer." So he lives in the exercise of prayer and though he may, at times be brought to his last shilling, yet there is never a meal that his children sit down to without sufficient bread. Our work may be different from his, but let us seek, whatever our work is, to do it so that when anyone reads of it, he will say, "He tried God in such-and-such a promise and his life was a standing proof that that promise did not fail." Whatever your promise is, let your life be seen to be the working out of the problem which has to be proved, and like any proposition of Euclid, which is stated at the beginning and proved at the end, so may we find a text put at the beginning of our lives as a promise to be fulfilled—and seen at the close, demonstrated, proved, and carried out!

But, dear Friends, let me just conclude by asking those here who have been brought to know their lost and ruined state, to remember this message, "Prove Me now." Thus says my God unto you, O Sinner, "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." My dear Hearer, are you lost and ruined? Prove God now! He says, "Call unto Me, and I will answer you." Come now, and call unto Him. "Knock," He says, "and it shall be opened unto you." Lift up the knocker of Heaven's door and sound it with all your might! Or, suppose you are too weak to knock—let the knocker fall down of itself. He has said, "Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Go and prove the promise now! Try to prove it. Are you a poor,

sick and wounded sinner? You are told that Jesus Christ is able and willing to heal your wounds and extract the poison from your veins. Prove Him, prove Him, poor Soul! You think yourself to be a lost one—therefore I urge you, in Christ’s name, to prove this promise—“I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.” Take this to Him and say, “O God, I need faith to trust Your Word! I know You mean what You have said. You have said, this morning, by the mouth of your minister, ‘Prove Me now.’ Lord, I will prove You now, this very day, even till nightfall if You do not answer me! I will still keep fast by Your promise.”

Do this, my Beloved, and you will not be gone long before you will be able to sing—

***“I’m forgiven, I’m forgiven!
I’m a miracle of Grace.”***

Now, do not stand still and say, “God will not hear such an one as I am. My disease is too bad for Him to cure.” Go and see, put your hand on the hem of His garment and then if the blood is not staunched, go and tell the world that you have proved God wrong. Go and tell it, if you dare. But oh, you cannot. If you touch the hem of His garment, I know what you will say—“I have tasted that the Lord is gracious. He said, ‘Trust in Me, and I will deliver you.’ I have trusted in Him and He has delivered me!” For the promise will always have its fulfillment. “Prove Me now,” says God.

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

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

GOD'S JEWELS

NO. 2970

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

*“And they shall be Mine, says the LORD of Hosts,
in that day when I make up My jewels.”
Malachi 3:17.*

THESE words were spoken in a very graceless age, when religion was peculiarly distasteful to men, when they scoffed at God's altar and said of His service, "What a weariness it is!" and scornfully asked, "What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance?" Yet even those dark nights were cheered by bright stars. Though the great congregations of God's House were but a mockery, yet there were smaller assemblies which God gazed upon with delight. Though the house of national worship was often deserted, there were secret conventicles of those who "feared the Lord" and who "spoke often, one to another," and our God, who regards quality more than quantity, had respect to these elect twos and threes! He "listened and heard" and He so approved of that which He heard that He took note of it and declared that He would publish it. "A book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name." Yes, and He valued so much these hidden ones, "faithful among the faithless found," that He called them His "jewels." And He declared that in the great day when He should gather together His "segullah," His regalia—the peculiar treasure of kings—He would look upon these hidden ones as being more priceless than emeralds, rubies, or pearls! "They shall be Mine," He said, "in the day when I gather up My jewels into My casket to be there forever."

We will try to work out this metaphor of jewels. Our first point shall be that *God's people are compared to jewels*. Our second, *the making up of the jewels*. And our third, *the privilege of being found among them*.

I. THE LORD COMPARES HIS PEOPLE TO JEWELS.

From the remotest antiquity, *men have thought much of precious stones*. Almost fabulous prices have been paid for them and there have been instances in which most bloody wars have been waged for the possession of a certain jewel renowned for its brilliance and size. Men hunt after gold, but the diamond they pursue with even greater eagerness. Five hundred men will work for a whole year in the diamond mines of Brazil when the entire produce of the year might be held in the hollow of your hand! And princes will give whole principalities, or barter the estates of half a nation in order to possess one peculiar brilliant of rare excellence. We wonder not, therefore, that the Lord, who elsewhere likens the precious sons of Zion to fine gold, should here compare them

to jewels. However little they may be esteemed by men, the great Jewel-Valuer, the Lord Jesus Christ, esteems them as precious beyond all price! His life was as dear to Him as life is to us, and yet all that He had, even His life, did He give for His elect ones. He counted down the price of His jewels in drops of bloody sweat in the gloomy Garden of Gethsemane. His very heart was set astir, streaming with priceless blood in order that He might redeem His people. We may compare our Lord to that merchant seeking goodly pearls, who, when He had found the one pearl of His Church, for the joy thereof went and sold all that He had that He might make it His own!

Our God sets great value upon those whom He calls His jewels, as we may gather not only from their costly redemption, but from the fact that all Providence is but a wheel upon which to polish and perfect them. Those stupendous wheels, which Ezekiel saw, were but a part of the machinery of the great Lapidary by which He cuts the facets of His true brilliants and makes His diamonds ready for His crown, for is it not written that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose"? The Lord values His people very highly—not only the rich among them, not alone the most gracious among them—but the very least and most unworthy among Believers are Jehovah's jewels! To fear the Lord and think upon His name are very simple indications of piety, yet, if we only come up to the standard which these evidences indicate, we are dear to God. What though we may possess no singular gifts or eminent graces. What though our voice may never be heard among the crowds of populous cities, yet still, if we "think upon His name," and our hearts are set towards the Lord Jesus, we are precious to Him!

Jewels well portray the Christian *because they are extremely hard and durable*. Most jewels will scratch glass. Some of them will cut it while they, themselves, will not be cut by the sharpest file. And many of them will be uninjured by the most potent acids. The Christian is such an one. He has within him a principle which is incorruptible, undefiled and destined to endure forever! In Pompeii and Herculaneum, diggers have discovered gems in an excellent state of preservation, while statuary and implements of iron have been destroyed. Jewels will last out the world's lifetime and glitter on as long as the sun shines! Rust does not corrupt them, nor does the moth devour them though the thief may break through and steal them. The Christian is born of an incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever. The world has often tried to crush or destroy God's diamonds, but all the attempts of malicious fury have failed. All that enmity has ever accomplished has only been, in the hands of God, the means of displaying the preciousness and brilliance of His jewels! The sham Christian, who is but a paste gem, soon yields to trial—he evaporates into a little noxious gas of self-conceit—and it is all over with him. A little heat of persecution and the man-made Christian—where is he? But the genuine Christian, the true gem, the choice jewel of God will survive the fires of time and, when the fast dissolving Day shall arrive, he shall come forth from the furnace without a flaw!

The jewel is *prized for its luster*. It is the brilliance of the gem which, in a great measure, is the evidence and test of its value. It is said that the colors of jewels are the brightest known and are the nearest approaches to the rays of the solar spectrum that have yet been discovered. Certainly there is no light like that which is reflected from the sincere Christian! The renewed heart catches the beams of the Sun of Righteousness and reflects them—not without some refraction, for we are mortal—but still, with much of glory, for we are immortal and God dwells in us! Look how the diamond flashes and sparkles! It is of the first water when, with certain other conditions, it is also without cloudiness and without spots. And oh, when a Christian is truly what a saint should be—what a luster, what a brilliance there is about him! He is like the Lord Jesus Christ, humble yet bold, teachable yet firm, gentle yet courageous! Like his Master, he goes about doing the will of Him that sent him. And though the wicked world may not love him, it cannot but perceive his brightness!

Look at Richard Baxter, in Kidderminster—what a flashing diamond he was! He had some spots, no doubt, but his brightness was most surprising! Even swearers on the ale-bench could not but know that He was a Heaven-born spirit! We might quote honored names out of all Christian churches which would be at once discerned by you as God's flashing brilliants because there is about them so little of the cloudiness of Nature—and so much of the brightness of Grace that he must be blind, indeed, who does not admire them! Precious stones are the flowers of the mineral world, the blossoms of the mines, the roses and lilies of earth's caverns. Scarcely has the eye ever seen a more beautiful object than the breastplate of the high priest, studded with the 12 gems, each with its own separate ray melting into a harmony of splendor and, albeit that the trickeries of pomp have but little influence over men of sober minds, I scarcely believe that there exists a single person who is altogether impervious to the influence of a crown set with ruby, pearl, emerald and a bright array of other costly gems!

There is a beauty, a Divine and superhuman beauty, about a Christian. He may be humbly clad and miserably housed. He may be poor and his name may never be mentioned among the great. But jewelers value a rare stone, none the less, because of its ill-setting. Beloved, nothing so delights God, next to the Person of His own dear Son, as the sight of one of those whom He has made like unto the Lord Jesus! Know you not that Christ's delights are with the sons of men and that the holiness, the patience, the devotion, the zeal, the love and the faith of His people are precious to Him? The whole creation affords no fairer sight to the Most High than an assembly of His sanctified people in whom He sees the beauty of His own Character reflected. May you and I have much of "the beauty of holiness" given to us by the Holy Spirit! May the Lord look upon us with Divine satisfaction because He sees in us the rays of the solar spectrum of His own ineffable perfection!

Christians are comparable to jewels *because of their rarity*. There are not many precious stones in the world. Of the smaller sorts, there may be many, but of the rarer gems, there are so few that a little child might

write them. Only six very large diamonds (called paragons) are known in the world and God's people are but few compared with the unregenerate multitude who are as the pebbles in the brook. The Christian belongs, like the ruby, the diamond and the emerald, to the choicest of created things. These stones are the aristocracy of minerals and Christians are the aristocracy of men. They are God's nobles. The roll of Battle Abbey—have you ever looked it through? Well, it is of little consequence. There is a better roll by far—and if your name is written *there*, it will be of infinitely more consequence to you! In Doomsday Book—is there a name there at all like yours? Never mind whether there is or not. There is a Doom's Day Book which will be of more value in the day of doom than Doomsday Book has ever been among the sons of men. Not many wise men after the flesh, not many great and noble have their names inscribed there—but all who are written in Heaven are, in another sense, wise, and great, and noble—for God has made them so through His own Grace. Not many are the gems which enrich the nations and not many are the saints who shine among men. The way to Heaven is narrow, and the Savior sorrowfully says, "Few there are that find it." There is a city where pearl, jasper, carbuncle and emerald are as common things. O fair Jerusalem, when shall these eyes behold your turrets and your pinnacles?

It is worthy of observation, too, that *a jewel is the production of God*. Diamonds have been burned and other jewels have been resolved into their elements. But, after the most laborious attempts, no chemist has yet been able to make a diamond. Men can cut the Gordian Knot, but they cannot tie it again. Lives have been wasted in attempts to produce precious stones, but the discovery is still unmade—they are the secret productions of God's own skill—and chemists fail to tell how they were produced, even though they know their elements. So the world thinks it knows what a Christian is, *but it cannot make one*. All the wit in the world put together could not find out the secret of the Heaven-born life! And all the so-called "sacraments," vestments, priests, prayers, and paraphernalia of Popery cannot create a Christian! "Yes," says one, "we take a little water and we make an infant a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven." Sir, you make yourself a liar—and nothing better when you so speak—for it is neither in your power, nor in the power of any other man to regenerate a soul by any performance, either with or without water! You may never wash a flint long enough before you can wash it into a diamond. To make jewels for Christ's crown is God's work and God's work alone! We might preach until our tongues grew dumb and men's ears grew deaf, but not a living soul would ever receive Divine Grace by our talk alone—the Spirit must go with the Word of God, or it is so much wasted breath! The Lord alone can create a child of Grace! And a Christian is as much a miracle as was Lazarus where he rose from the tomb. It is as great a work of Deity to create a Believer as it is to create a world!

It is worthy of remark, too, that *jewels are of many kinds*. Perhaps there is not a single ray in the spectrum which is not represented among them—from the purest white of the diamond, the red of the ruby, the

bright green of the emerald, to the blue of the sapphire. So is it with God's people. They are not all alike and they never will be! All attempts at uniformity must fail and it is very proper that they should. We need not wish to be one in the sense of uniformity, but only in the sense of unity—not all one jewel, but many set in one crown. It little matters whether we shine with the sapphire's blue, or the emerald's green, or the ruby's red, or the diamond's white, so long as we are the Lord's in the day when He makes up His jewels!

Jewels are of all sizes, yet they are all jewels. One is a Koh-I-Noor, a very mountain of light, but it is not any more a diamond because it is large, though it is more precious. The smallest dust of the diamond that comes from the lapidary's wheel is made of the same material as the richest jewel that sparkles in the monarch's crown and, even so, those Christians who have but little faith and little Grace, are still as much the Divine workmanship as the brightest and most precious in the believing family! And what is more, they shall be in the casket when the others are there, for it is said of them all, "They shall be Mine in that day when I make up My jewels."

Once more, *jewels are found all over the world.* In the most frozen regions, on the tops of mountains and in the depths of mines, jewels have been discovered, but they are said to be most numerous in tropical regions. So, Christians are to be found everywhere. Blessed be the name of God, the Eskimos have sung the praises of Immanuel in the regions of eternal ice! And the children of the sun have learned to adore the Sun of Righteousness in the midst of the torrid zone! But in England, which is the tropical region of Divine Grace, the land where the Gospel is preached in our streets, we find the most of Believers, as also in a few other happy lands which, like our own fair island, lie upon the Equinoctial line of Gospel privilege, where the Grace of God has given the Gospel in its greatest purity!

Wherever the jewels have been found, though they differ in some respects, yet *they are all alike in others. Kings delight in them and are glad to use them as regal ornaments.* So, wherever the Lord finds His precious ones, East or West, or North or South, He sees something in them in which they all agree, and He delights in them. Our Lord Jesus counts them to be His true ornaments with which He arrays Himself as a bridegroom adorns himself with ornaments, and as a bride decks herself with jewels. God delights in Christians, come from whatever part they may. Although they may be of many tongues and though the colors of their skins may vary, yet are they still very, very precious in His sight—and they shall be His in that day when He makes up His jewels!

II. In the second place, let us consider THE MAKING UP OF THE JEWELS.

We have not come to the day of the making up of the jewels, for *some of them are at this hour hidden and undiscovered.* There is no doubt that many precious stones will yet be found. Diamond hunters are, at this moment, looking for them in the caverns of the earth and washing the soil of the mines to find them. Many of the chosen of God are not yet

manifested. The missionaries in heathen lands are toiling to discover them amid the mire of idolatry. My daily business and calling is that of a jewel hunter—and this pulpit is the place where I try to separate the precious from the vile. Sunday school teachers and other workers are also diamond hunters. They deal with gems far more precious than millions of gold and silver. Oh, that all Christians were seekers of souls, for there is much need of all hands and it is a work which well rewards the laborer. All the chosen are not yet saved. Blood-bought multitudes remain to be gathered in! Oh, for Grace to seek them diligently! Because of the absence of so many of the Lord's gems, the "making up" of the jewels has not yet taken place—but the time for that is hastening on!

Many jewels are found, *but they are not yet polished*. They are precious gems, but it is only lately that they have been lifted up from the mine. When the diamond is first discovered, it glitters but little. You can see that it is a precious gem, but perhaps one half of it will have to be cut away before it sparkles with fullest splendor. The lapidary must torment it upon his wheel and many hundreds of pounds must be spent before perfection is reached. In some cases, thousands of pounds have been expended before the diamond has been brought to its full excellence. So it will be with many of the Lord's people—they are justified, but they are not completely sanctified. Corruption has to be subdued, ignorance removed, unbelief cut away, worldliness taken off before they can be set in the crown of the great King! For this also the King waits and His jewels are not "made up."

Many of the Lord's gems are but partly polished. Indeed, there are none on earth yet perfect. This is not the land of perfection! Some persons dream of it—their pretensions are but a dream. We have heard some say that they were perfect, but they were not perfect in the virtue of humility, or they would not have boasted after so vain-glorious a fashion! The saints are still in the Lapidary's hands. The Master is taking off first one angle and then another, and rending away much which we have foolishly cherished—but through this cutting process we shall sparkle gloriously before long, so that those who knew us on earth will be amazed to see the difference in Heaven! Perhaps it will be part of the joy of Heaven to perceive our conquest over sin, to see how the Divine hand has shed a glory and beauty upon the poor dull stones of earth!

The making up is delayed, too, because *certain of the gems which have been partly polished are missing*. "Oh," you say, "does the Lord ever lose any of His gems?" "No, not forever, but for a time they may be missing. A certain blue diamond that was very greatly renowned was, by some means, lost at the time of the French Revolution and has never been heard of since. It is somewhere, however, and God knows where it is—and it is still a diamond. And so there are some of His people who go astray and we cannot tell where they are. But still, "the Lord knows them that are His" and, "the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Backslider, you were once a jewel in the church—you were put down in the book as a church member, but from the casket of the church, Satan stole you. Ah, but you did not belong to him and he

cannot keep you! You have agreed to be his, but your agreement does not stand for anything. You did not belong to yourself and so you could not give yourself away. Christ has the first and only valid claim to you and will yet obtain His rights by the Omnipotence of His Grace. Because of these missing jewels, the long-suffering of God waits. But the day is coming—its axles are hot with speed—when sardius, topaz and carbuncle shall glisten in the same crown with emerald, sapphire and diamond, nor shall ligure, agate, amethyst, beryl, onyx, or jasper be lacking—they shall all be “set in gold in their enclosing.”

III. Upon THE HONORABLE PRIVILEGE of being numbered with the crown jewels of Jehovah, we will utter hardly more than a few sentences, and we will preface them with words of self-examination.

“They shall be Mine.” This does not include all men, but only “those that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.” Standing in the midst of this immense assembly and remembering that a very large proportion of my Hearers are professors of faith in Christ, I am happy to be in such a great jewel house! But when I reflect that it is a very easy thing, indeed, to imitate a jewel so that the counterfeit cannot be detected except by the most skillful jeweler, I feel solemnly impressed with the desire that none of you may be deceived! It is not very long ago that a lady possessed a sapphire supposed to be worth £10,000. Without informing her relatives, she sold it and procured an imitation of it so cleverly fashioned that when she died, it was valued by a jeweler in order that the probate duty might be paid upon it—and the trustees of the estate actually paid probate duty upon it to our government on £10,000 for what was not really worth more than a few pence—for they imagined that it was the real sapphire.

Now if in examining material jewels, men well skilled have been thus deceived, you will not wonder if, in connection with the jewels of mind and spirit, it is so difficult to detect an impostor! You may deceive the minister, the deacons and the church—no, you may easily deceive *yourselves* and even pay the probate duty! You may be making sacrifices and discharging duties on account of true religion, as you think, but really for something which is not worth the name! Beloved in the Lord, be zealous for vital godliness! Hate hypocrisy, shun deception and watch against formality! I will make a pause and give you time, in a few minutes of silence, to pray that ancient and necessary prayer, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” All paste gems and all the glass imitations will surely be detected in the day which will burn as an oven! May we be found among the Lord’s genuine jewels in that dread testing day!

If we are the Lord’s, then what privileges are ours! Then are we safe. If we really pass the scales at the last, there will be no more questioning, suspicions, beatings, weighing, or cutting. If the Great Valuer accepts us as being genuine, then we shall be secure forever!

Nor is this all, Beloved. We shall also be *honored*. Remember where the jewels are to shine forever. Jesus Himself shall wear them as His

glory and joy! Believers will be unrivalled illustrations of the Glory of Divine Grace throughout all ages. Can you see our glorious Well-Beloved? There He sits—adored of angels and admired of men! But what are the ornaments He wears? Worlds were too small to be signets upon His fingers and the zodiac too poor a thing to bind the sandals of His feet. But, oh, how bright He is, how glorious! And what are the jewels which display His beauty? They are souls redeemed by His death from going down into the Pit! Blood-washed sinners! Men and women who, but for Him, would have been tormented forever in the flames, but who now rejoice to sing, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever.” So then—once acknowledged to be Christ’s, you are not only safe, but you will be in the closest communion with Christ throughout eternity! It is a bliss, the thought of which may well flash with vehement flame through your hearts even now, that you are, one day, to display the Glory of Immanuel that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places shall be made known, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God! You are to be His “gold rings set with the beryl.” With you as His reward, His Person will be “as bright as ivory overlaid with sapphires.” You are so dear to Him that He bought you with His own blood because you could not be “gotten for gold, neither could silver be weighed for the price thereof.” Your redemption by His death proves that your soul could not be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx or the sapphire! And when the ever-glorious God shall exhibit your sanctified spirit as an illustration of His glorious Character and work, no mention shall be made of coral or of pearls, for your worth will be above rubies! The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal you, nor shall the precious crystal be compared to you.

But I hear a mournful voice crying, “All this is concerning the precious ones, but there is nothing for me. I was in hopes that there would have been something for a sinner like me.” Well, what are you, then? Are you not a jewel? “No,” you cry, “I am not a jewel. I am only a common stone. I am not worth the picking up—I am just one of the many pebbles on the shore of life—and the tide of death will soon wash me into the great ocean of eternity! I am not worthy of God’s thoughts. I am not even worth His treading upon—I shall, with multitudes of others, be swallowed up in the great deep of wrath and never be heard of again!”

Soul, did you never hear this text? “I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” What stones were they? They were ordinary loose stones in Jordan’s bed. John was standing in the river baptizing and pointing to those worthless pebbles not worth picking up. He said, “God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” Even so, this night, God is able of these stones around me in this vast throng to make gems which shall be His treasure in the day when He makes up His jewels! You cannot thus exalt yourselves, nor can I do it for you, but there is a secret and mysterious process by which, by Divine art, the common stone is transmuted into the diamond! And though you are a stone black with sin, or blood-red

with crime—though you are a flinty stone with jagged edges of blasphemy—though you are such a stone as Satan delights to throw at the Truth of God, yet God can transform you into a jewel! He can do it in an instant!

Do you know how He can do it? There is a wondrous rod with which He works matchless transformations. That rod is the Cross! Jesus Christ suffered that sinners might not suffer! Jesus Christ died that sinners might not die, but that “whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”! Sinner though you are—if you come beneath the Cross and trustingly look up to God’s dear Son, you shall be saved! And that salvation includes a complete change of nature by which you shall fear the Lord, think upon His name and mingle with those who speak often, one to another, with the certainty of being the Lord’s when He makes up His jewels!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MALACHI 3; 4.

Malachi 3:1. *Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me.* The name Malachi means “my messenger.” The reference here is, of course, to John the Baptist who was to prepare the way of the Lord.

1. *And the lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple.* Now, the Temple at Jerusalem is utterly destroyed, so how can the Jews still think the Lord, whom they profess to seek, will suddenly come to His Temple? He must have come there already—so we know He did—for there is not one stone of the Temple left standing upon another—“The Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple”

1. *Even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom you delight in: behold, He shall come, says the LORD of Hosts.* Christ was the great Messenger of the Covenant, the Messenger of mercy. And the Lord’s own people, even in that ancient time, delighted in anticipating the coming of the Christ of God, the anointed and appointed Messenger of the Lord of Hosts!

2. *But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap.* All that only looked like religion, but was not real and genuine was purged away at His coming. He was like a refiner’s fire, consuming the false pretensions of the Pharisees and the vain boastings of the Scribes. There is, in the religion of Jesus Christ, a power that is a great purgative and a great refiner!

3. *And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.* Christ comes suddenly, but He comes to stay. “He shall sit.” If He comes into our heart at this moment—and He may come there suddenly—He will come to stay there and He will sit there “as a refiner and purifier of silver.”

3. *And He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.* Those men called to holy service shall offer unto the Lord offerings in righteousness after He has cleansed and purified them. You cannot

worship God rightly until you have been cleansed by Christ. Till then, you are like priests with defiled feet, unfit to come into the sanctuary of God. But when Christ has purified you, fail not to draw near to God and to present your thanks offering to Him.

4, 5. *Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years. And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not Me, says the Lord of Hosts.* See how hard taskmasters are put, by Divine Inspiration, with sorcerers, and adulterers, and false swearers? They do not think badly of themselves, but the Lord thinks badly of them! And His judgment is always just.

6. *For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.* This is their comfort—even the Immutability of God is on the side of His people! He is just and always just! He hates sin and always hates sin! Yet that unchangeableness of His is always on the side of the people of His choice!

7. *Even from the days of your fathers you are gone away from My ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, says the LORD of Hosts.* You wanderers from God, take this invitation home to your hearts and act upon it! Arise and return unto your Father, for when you are yet a great way off, He will see you and will run to meet you, and have compassion upon you—“Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, says the Lord of Hosts.”

7. *But you said, Wherein shall we return?* God takes notice of what men say to Him after He has spoken to them. He will take notice of what you say when you go out of this House of Prayer. Erring men usually have something to say for themselves. The self-righteous can always invent some excuse, or ask some question, as they did here—“Wherein shall we return?”

8. *Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me.* They were always ready to deny or question a just accusation, instead of letting it operate upon their conscience, so they asked about this charge.

8. *But you say, Wherein have we robbed You? In tithes and offerings.* They had kept back from God's service the money which was necessary for the carrying on of the worship of His house. We read, in Nehemiah 13:10, that “the Levites and the singers that did the work, were fled, everyone, to his field,” for they could not live at Jerusalem because “the portions of the Levites had not been given them”—their supply of provisions having been stopped through the meanness of the people who had thus robbed the Lord “in tithes and offerings.”

9. *You are cursed with a curse: for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation.* They could not make out why they were so poor and why they could not get on! The real reason was that there was a curse resting upon all that they did because they had robbed God.

10. *Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and prove Me now herewith, says the LORD of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.* They had kept themselves poor by their own meanness! If they had behaved rightly towards God, He would have enriched them with the bounties of His Providence. The very windows of Heaven would have been thrown open to give them abundance for all their needs.

11. *And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, says the LORD of Hosts.* The locust and the caterpillar came up and ate their harvests—all because God was angry with them—and He alone could change their miserable circumstances.

12. *And all nations shall call you blessed: for you shall be a delightsome land, says the LORD of Hosts.* God is able, simply with a turn of His hand, or a glance of His eyes, to enrich or to impoverish. He gives in a thousand ways that we cannot control and He takes from us in as many ways which perhaps we cannot understand. It is always best to be right with God.

13-15. *Your words have been harsh against Me, says the LORD. Yet you say, What have we spoken so much against You? You have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of Hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yes, they that work wickedness are set up; yes, they that tempt God are even delivered.* Those were indeed bad old times when the mass of the people looked only to their own temporal comfort! When they saw the wicked become rich, they wished that they were wicked, too, in order that they might be rich. They thought that it was of no use to serve God! But happily there was another set of people in the land, as there always is, more or less. God never leaves Himself without witnesses—and when the wicked are proudest, God's people are often boldest.

16. *Then.* At that very time—

16. *They that feared the LORD spoke often, one to another.* They could not bear to hear their God thus spoken of, so they went to one another's houses. They found one another out and talked to one another.

16. *And the Lord listened.* He loves to listen to the holy talk of a holy people. "The Lord listened."

16. *And heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His name.* That is a very precious expression. You cannot, perhaps, speak much for the Lord, yet you think the more about Him—and God remembers those who think upon His name. Yet, often, thinking leads to speaking and there ought to be no speaking without previous thought! God loves to listen to the thoughtful conversation of a loving people who stand true to Him in the midst of an ungodly crowd—and He thinks very highly of them.

17. *And they shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels.* "Others, who thought much of themselves, shall be

thrown away like worthless pebbles, but these faithful ones shall be Mine in that day when I am putting My jewels into My crown, for they shall be precious in My sight.”

17. *And I will spare them, as a man spares his own son that serves him.* When the sword of the enemy is drawn from its sheath. When disease is putting down its myriads. When God's vengeance has laid hold upon the ungodly He will be a hiding place for His people and will care for them as a man would anxiously care, not only for his son, but for his only son, one who is obedient and faithful to his father—“his own son that serves him.”

18. *Then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked.* Not now, but *then*—by-and-by there shall be a distinguishing mark set upon all mankind! “Then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked.”

18. *Between him that serves God and he that serves Him not.*

Malachi 4:1, 2. *For, behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the LORD of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you.* Here is the difference, “But unto you.”

2. *That fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise.* Not like a scorching and burning oven as the sun of the heavens is in the East, but He shall arise!

2. *With healing in His wings and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.* All is right with those who are right with God!

3-6. *And you shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, says the LORD of Hosts. Remember you the Law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: and He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their father, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.* The Old Testament ends with the mutterings of a curse, but the New Testament begins with a message of blessing concerning the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! What a mercy to come from under the Old Covenant unto the New!

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

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

GREAT DIFFERENCE

NO. 1415

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 19, 1878,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Where is the God of Judgment?”
Malachi 2:17.***

***“Then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked,
between him that serves God and him that serves Him not.”
Malachi 3:18.***

You were not here, I am thankful to say, last Lord's-Day evening, for it was your duty and privilege to stay away to give others an opportunity of hearing. My subject, then, [Sermon #1414, *No Difference*] was our heavenly Father who makes His sun to rise upon the evil and upon the good and sends rain upon the just and upon the unjust. Then I set forth the universal benevolence of God and the way in which He stays the operations of Justice to give space for forbearance and long-suffering. Now this fact, this gracious fact, which ought to lead man to repentance, has, through the perversity of human nature, been used for quite another purpose. Men have said, “He blesses the evil as well as the good. The sun shines on all alike. The rain indiscriminately enriches the field of the tyrant and the pasture of the generous heart—where is the God of Judgment? Is there such a God? Is it not one and the same whether we fear Him or disregard Him?”

Side by side with this has run another circumstance perhaps even more readily misunderstood. God is, in this life, preparing His people for a better world and part of that process is effected by trial and affliction so that it frequently happens that the godly are in adversity while the wicked are in prosperity. Having no such designs toward them as toward His people, the Lord permits the wicked to enjoy themselves while they may, so that oftentimes they are as bullocks fattened in rich pastures—but they forget that they are fattened for the *slaughter*! The righteous, brought very low, are often in poverty, frequently in sickness and not seldom in dependency of spirit—but all to prepare them for Glory! From the trials of the godly, which are all sent in wisdom and in love, shortsighted man has inferred that God has no regard to human character and even treats those worst who serve Him best.

In Malachi's days the blaspheming crew even said that God takes sides with the wicked and they wearied God by saying—“Everyone that does evil is good in the sight of the Lord and He delights in them.” Then again they uttered the old rude but plain-spoken question, “Where is the God of Judgment?” Truly Brothers and Sisters, in looking with these poor eyes upon the affairs around us, they do appear to be a great tangle and snarl, a mixed medley of strange happenings. We see the true princes of the

earth walking in the dust and beggars riding upon horses! We mourn as we see servants of God and heirs of Heaven lying, like Lazarus, sick at the gate of the ungodly miser, while the vicious libertine is rioting in luxury and drinking full bowls of pleasure!

Until we perceive the clue, Providence is a labyrinth into whose center we can never penetrate. But there *is* a clue which opens all its secrets! There is a God of Judgment, not sitting in Heaven in blind indifference, but looking down upon the sons of men and working out purposes of righteousness at all times. At this time I propose to speak upon the fact that God *does* put a difference between the righteous and the wicked and makes no mistake between Egypt and Israel. The Lord knows them that are His and in His dealings, which we cannot always understand, He has not confused His people with the world, nor does the rod of the wicked rest upon the lot of the righteous. He has a right hand of acceptance for them that fear Him and He has a left hand of punishment for those that fear Him not.

This distinction is not so apparent, yet, as it shall be, but we shall now trace the gradual widening of the division between the two classes and show that still there is a God of Judgment and that, by-and-by, even the blindest eye shall be able to discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves God and him that serves Him not.

I. First, then, THERE ARE SIGNS OF SEPARATION between the righteous and the wicked. The first sign is seen in the evident difference of character. "They that feared the Lord" are spoken of. That is to say, there are still some on the face of the earth who believe that there *is* a God, who believe in the Revelation which He has given, who accept the Atonement which He has provided and who delight to be obedient to the will which He has declared. How came they to fear the Lord? The answer is, it is a gift of His Grace and a work of His Spirit wherever it is found. It makes a distinction very deep, very vital and, consequently, very lasting, for it shall continue throughout eternity!

Let us bless God that in the worst times He still has a remnant according to the election of Grace! And when blasphemers grow bold in sin and say, "Where is the God of Judgment?" there are at least a few hidden ones who nevertheless look up and behold the Lord exalted above the rage of His foes. There will always be a band who bow the knee and worship the Most High because their hearts stand in awe of Him. God is beginning to separate His chosen from the world when He gives them an inward sense of His Presence and a consequent holy fear and sacred awe of Him. The dividing work begins here—in the bent and current of the heart.

This difference in real character soon shows itself in a remarkable change of thought and meditation. According to the passage before us, those who are said to, "fear the Lord," are also described as those who, "thought upon His name." Their thoughts are not always towards the transient things of this world, but they are much engaged with the eternal God and His truth—they are not always groveling after the creature, but soaring towards the Creator. The Hebrew word has the idea of "counting"—they reckon the Lord as the chief consideration when they count up

their arguments for action. Others do not take Him into the reckoning, they act as if there were no God at all. But the righteous make much of Him and account Him to be the greatest factor in all their calculations—they fall back upon God in trouble—and joy most of all in Him when they are glad.

They reckon not without the Lord of Hosts. They say, “The best of all is, God is with us.” And concerning any action, if it is contrary to His mind, they reject it. If it is according to His will they think upon Him and they delight to carry it out. This makes a great difference in their course of life and also in their happiness. Dear Hearers, I trust there are many among you who can truly say that your meditation of God has been very sweet and you have been glad in the Lord. This, then, is working out a distinction between you and the wicked who forget God. You fear the Lord and you take delight in meditating upon Him in secret, but this, the worldling cannot understand. This makes a distinction between you and the careless which does not long exist without operating in a further direction—you grow weary of their frivolous conversation and they cannot endure your serious observations! And so two parties are formed, as of old there were two lines—the sons of God and the children of Cain.

You will soon see Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob living over again if you watch the thoughtless worldling and the pious Christian and mark how much they differ. Therefore there grows out of this difference of thought and feeling a separation as to society. “Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another,” which shows that they often *met* and that they delighted in one another’s company. Each man felt himself feeble in the midst of the ungodly and, therefore, he sought out a Brother that he might be strengthened by association. Each man felt himself to be like a sheep in the midst of wolves, but knowing the nature of sheep to be gregarious, each one sought his fellow, that they might make up a flock, hoping that, as a flock, they might gather round the Good Shepherd. Yes, and in the ungodliest times there are not only gracious people here and there, but these chosen souls, by some means or other, make mutual discoveries and come together and so form the visible Church of the living God!

In Rome, in the days of the Caesars, when to be a Christian meant to be condemned to die without mercy, if Believers could not meet in their houses, they would meet in the abodes of the dead—in the Catacombs—but they must meet. It is the nature of God’s children that they do not like going to Heaven *alone*, but prefer to go up to the temple in bands and companies—and the more the merrier, as the proverb has it—for they delight to go with the multitude that keep Holy Day and they rejoice to fly in flocks like doves to their windows. There is a Divine sweetness in Christian communion and every true saint delights in it! The essence of our religion is love and he that loves not the Brethren, loves not God and lacks an essential point of the Christian character.

By the exercise of holy Brotherhood the Lord continues to call out His own people and thus to create a manifest separation. Likeness of character and thought produce a mutual affection and so a corporate body is

formed and the solitary secret ones become manifest in the mass. The chosen stones are quarried and are built into the similitude of a palace—what if I say that they come together bone to His bone to fashion the spiritual body of the Lord Jesus Christ? This distinct association leads on to a peculiar occupation—for, “they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another.” They heard others speak *against* the Lord and they resolved to speak, too. Of others the Lord complained, “your words have been stout against Me, says the Lord,” and these men felt that it would be a shame if they were silent. They did not cast their pearls before swine, yet they wore their pearls where those who were not swine, but saints, could see them! In society where the Truth of God would be appreciated, they were not backward to declare it—“they spoke often one to another.”

It was a time of noise and tumult. It was a time of speaking very bitterly *against* the Lord. Therefore when they met together they spoke *for* the Lord and each one opened his mouth that the Lord might not lack for witnesses. I take it that the expression means that they renewed and repeated their testimony. “They spoke often one to another.” They said, “Ah, we can answer what the ungodly are saying! Our experience testifies that they speak not aright. It is not a vain thing to serve God. How do you find it, Brother?” Then the Brother would say, “I find it exceedingly comforting and cheering to my soul. They have said, What profit is it that we have kept His ordinances? But I have found it exceedingly profitable, for in keeping His commandments there is great reward.” Then a third would say, “It has enriched our souls to walk according to the mind of God and in the blessed ordinances of His house our souls have been fed and exceedingly nourished.”

A fourth would add, “The ungodly say it is in vain that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts—do you find it so, Brother?” The reply would be, “No, my mournful days have often been most profitable, like the days of shower and cloud which have most to do with the harvest.” “Besides,” said another, “we do not walk mournfully before the Lord as a rule, for we rejoice before Him, yes, in His name we do exceedingly rejoice!” Thus, you see, by their testimony, the one to the other, they supported each other’s minds against the popular infidelities of the time. They set their thoughtful experience against the vicious falsehoods of unbelieving men and so they both honored God and benefited each other.

When they “spoke often one to another” I have no doubt they expressed their affection, one for the other. They said, “Let us not marvel if the world hates us! Did not our Master say, ‘It hated Me before it hated you’? Did He not tell us to beware of man? Did He not remind us that our worst enemies should be those of our own household.” “Yes, Brothers and Sisters,” they would say, one to another, “let us love one another, for love is of God.” The elders would speak like John the Divine and say, “Little children, love one another.” And the younger ones would respond by acts and words of loving respect to the older saints. Their mutual expressions of love would increase love! As when we lay live coals together, they burn the better, so loving intercommunications increase the heat of affection till it glows like coals of juniper which have a most vehement flame!

No doubt, for we know by what we see, this speaking, one to another, assisted each other's faith. One might be weak, but they were not all weak at once! One and another would be strong just then. We all have our ups and downs, but the mercy is that when one is sinking, another is rising! It will frequently happen that if the sun does not shine on my side of the hedge, it is shining on yours, and you can tell me that the sun is not snuffed out but that it will shine on me, too, by-and-by. Commerce makes nations rich and Christian communion makes Believers grow in Grace. Speaking often, one to another, with the view of helping the weak hands and confirming the feeble knees is a means of great blessing to the souls of Christians!

When they met, one would tell what he knew which his Brother or Sister might not know, and a third would say, "I can confirm that statement and add something more," and so the first speaker would learn as well as teach. Then a fourth Brother would say, "But there is yet another Truth which stands in relation to that which you have stated, do not overlook it." Thus by communion in *experience* and each one expressing what the Lord had written upon his heart, the whole would be edified in righteousness. Now, Beloved, it is in proportion as the children of God speak often, one to another, in this way that the Church is brought out into a visible condition. A silent Church might grope through the world unobserved, but a speaking Church—speaking often within itself—is of necessity soon heard beyond the doors of the house in which it dwells!

Soon does the sound of Gospel music steal over hill and dale. "Their sound has gone forth throughout all the earth and their words unto the end of the world." The speaking together of assembled saints at Pentecost led to the gift of tongues and then they spoke so that every man in His own language heard the wonderful works of the Lord! An increase of private communion among the saints would lead to a fuller public communication to the outside and the world would receive a blessing. Thus I have shown you that the Lord thus gradually begins to separate a people to Himself. The fear of the Lord in the heart and the thought of God in the mind lead to association in persons of similar mold—hence arises the Church. Then the interchange of expression between the godly makes them zealous and this leads to public testimony and the people of God are revealed!

You will say that this does not prove that God is dealing differently with them from other men. "Where is the God of Judgment?" is the question, and how is it to be answered? My reply is, in all this the Lord is putting a difference. To work His fear in the heart is an act of Sovereign Grace, but to enable the soul to find deep enjoyment in meditating upon Divine things is a reward as well as a gift of Grace—and a reward more valuable than if He gave the God-fearing man wealth and fame! Christian society is also no small token of the Divine favor and is another reward of the God-fearing. I do not know how you find it, but I can truly assert that my choicest delights are with the people of God. What a great deal some of us owe to Christian fellowship! People whom we should never have known and never have thought of speaking to are now our choicest friends and

have been and are incalculably helpful to us. Christian love has enlarged our family circle wonderfully! We have come to be intertwined, the one with the other, and the separate threads have ceased to be such for they have become a threefold cord which cannot be broken! And this is no small gift of Divine Grace.

Moreover, the communications which have arisen out of this society in which we have edified one another, have they not been very precious to us? Can you not say you had rather dwell for a day in the courts of the Lord than reign in the tents of wickedness for ages? Is it not so that when we are able to rejoice together and tell our experiences, we find a pleasure which makes the wilderness and the solitary place to be glad? Best of all, it is in the midst of these communications where holy society yields us gracious fellowship, that God Himself is found! This is the grand distinction in God's relation to the universe at this present time—that He is with His people and they know it—while He is far from the wicked. The Lord listened and heard of old and He still listens and hears—and the Lord *answers* the prayers of His children out of His holy place—and sends tokens of acceptance to those who praise and magnify His name.

“The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.” Oh come, let us exult before Him, for He is not far away, nor has He hidden His face from us, but He dwells between the cherubim and shines forth among His saints in the Person of His dear Son and manifests Himself to us as He does not to the world! Even now, Israel in Egypt is not Egypt, for God is pitying the sighs and cries of His people! Israel in the Arabian desert is not Arabian, for, lo, the fiery cloudy pillar, like an lifted up standard, gathers around it a separated people. Lo, “The people shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations.” Even now the faithful, in going out from the world and being separate, find the promise fulfilled—“I will dwell in them and walk in them. And I will be their God and they shall be My people.” *There* is the first answer to the question, “Where is the God of Judgment?” The separation is already beginning—there are signs of it *now!*

II. Secondly, THERE ARE PREPARATIONS FOR A FINAL SEPARATION and these are, at this moment, proceeding. What these preparations are we learn from the 16th verse—“The Lord listened and heard it and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name.” There is a day coming in which He will separate the two sorts of men, the one from the other, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. The great net is now dragging the sea bottom—the day is coming when the net shall be hauled in and drawn to shore. What a medley it contains of good and bad fish, of creeping things, weeds, shells and stones—this mass must be separated! Then will come the putting of the good into vessels and the casting of the bad away.

When that is done it will be executed with great solemnity and care. There will be great discrimination used in the dividing of the righteous from the wicked and, as at a trial, everything proceeds upon *evidence*, the separating work is being prepared for us every day because the evidence is being collected and recorded. The evidence in favor of the righteous

might be forgotten if it were not duly preserved in order that in the day when the separation shall be consummated there may be no mistake and nobody may be able to challenge the decision of the great Judge. Remember this, dear Friends, that evidence is being written down in a book—evidence of fidelity to God in evil times. When others were thinking against God and speaking against God, there were some who spoke on His behalf because they feared Him and thought upon His name—and their conduct was reported upon and chronicled!

God's gracious eyes never overlooks one single act of decision for Him in the midst of blasphemy and rebuke. If the timid girl in the midst of a Christless family still patiently endures reproach and holds on to her Master's Truth—though she cannot speak eloquently—behold, it is written in the book! Though her tears may often be her strongest expressions, they are in the book, also, and shall not be forgotten! When the workman in the shop speaks a word against filthy language, a word for the sacredness of the Sabbath, a word for his Lord, it is all written in the Book of Remembrance! A commission is instituted for the collection of evidence as to those that fear the Lord and think upon His name.

Are you, dear Friends, furnishing evidence, do you think, evidence which will prove that you are truly godly? Do you clearly stand out from among your fellows and are you manifestly separate, so that even Satan himself at the Last Great Day will not be able to challenge the evidence that will be given, that you did, indeed, fear the Lord when others reviled Him? This evidence is being taken by the Lord Himself! There is much consolation in this, because others might be prejudiced and give an unfavorable view of what we do. But when the Lord Himself bears witness, the truth will be manifested. "The Lord listened and heard." It is a very strong expression! He not only "listened," as one trying to hear, but He did actually hear all that was said! What a witness God will be in favor of His saints! If we really fear Him and think upon His name He will set our holy fear, our godly thought and our gracious talk in evidence on our behalf.

He reads our motives and these are a deep and vital part of character. Others might err, but He cannot—what He hears is accurately heard and correctly understood. Evidence is being collected, then, by a Witness who is Truth itself! This evidence is before God's eyes at all times. If you notice, "the book of remembrance was written before Him," as if while every item was being put down, the book lay open before His gaze. From Him the record is no more concealed than the act itself—past deeds of virtue are present to His eyes. Every recorded act of Grace is especially noticed by the Lord. Every separate word of faithfulness and act of true God-fearing life is noted, weighed, estimated, valued and safely preserved in memory to justify the verdict of the last grand dividing day!

Think of it, then, Beloved Brothers and Sisters—all that Divine Grace is working in you of humble faithfulness to God is being recorded! No annual report will proclaim it. It will never be printed in a magazine, nor advertised through the newspapers so as to bring you renown. But a Book of Remembrance is written before the Lord Himself! There it lies before Him whose single approval is more than fame! There, read a page—"Such an

one thought upon My name. So-and-So spoke to his brother concerning Me and helped to the mutual edification of the body and to the bearing of powerful testimony for My Truth against the assaults of error.”

This evidence, moreover, dear Friends, is of a *spiritual* kind and this is one reason why it is taken down by God and by no one else, for it is evidence concerning the state of the *heart* in reference to God! And who is to form that estimate but the Lord who searches the heart? Who is to know the thoughts of the mind, save God alone? There is an ear that hears thought. Though it is not indicated by a sound so loud as the tick of a clock, nor so audible as the chirping of a little bird, yet every thought is vocal to the mind of the Most High and it is written down in the Remembrance Book! Certain great actions which every man applauds may never go into that book because they were done from motives of ostentation, but the thought which nobody could have known and which must otherwise have remained in oblivion is recorded by the Lord and shall be published at the last assize!

Perhaps it ran thus, “What can I do for Jesus? How can I help His poor people? How can I cheer such-and-such a languishing spirit? How can I defeat error? How can I win a wandering soul for my Master?” Such thoughts as these are reckoned worthy of record and they are supplying evidence which, in His gracious love, the Lord is collecting that the sentence of His great tribunal may be justified to all. That evidence concerns apparently little things, for it mentions that “they spoke one to another.” Of course people will gossip when they get together—what is there in talk? Oh, but what sort of gossip was it? That is the question! For a holy theme turns gossip into heavenly fellowship! It is written, they “thought upon His name.” Surely it is not much to think? Ah Brethren, thinking and speaking are two very powerful forces in the world and out of them the greatest actions are hatched. Thoughts and words are the seeds of far-reaching deeds and God takes care of these embryos and germs—men do not even know of them and if they did know, would not esteem them—but they are put down in the Book of Remembrance which lies always open before the Most High!

Now, all this is going on every day and every night as certainly as time’s sands drop through the hour-glass. Letter after letter, stroke by stroke, the story is being written in the Book of Remembrance and though men see it not, the evidence is being gathered up to be used in that dread solemnity in which, amidst the pomp of angels, the great Infallible shall separate the blessed of His Father from those who are accursed! Thus every day the God of Judgment is working towards the time when even the most careless shall discern between the righteous and the wicked.

III. This brings us to the third point that IN THAT SEPARATION GREAT PRINCIPLES WILL BE MANIFESTED. I shall only have time to mention them rapidly. First, the principle of election will be displayed. God will have a people who are more His than other men can be. “They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day.” “All souls are Mine,” says God, and His witness is true, but He rejects some souls because of sin and says, “You are not My people.” As for His chosen, they are His portion, His

peculiar treasure, His regalia, His crown jewels and they shall be His forever. Then will special love and peculiar choice be manifest, for in the day of the separation it shall be seen that the Lord knows them that are His and while He counts others to be as mere stones of the field, He has set His heart upon the saints who are the gems of His crown.

And then will come, as the next principle, the fact of essential value—namely, that the Lord's people are not only His but they are His jewels. There is something in them which Grace has put there, which makes them to be more precious than other men. "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor." God's Grace makes His children to be purer, holier, heavenlier than the rest of mankind—and they are rightly divided from the impure and worthless mass. They will at the last, by evidence, be proved to have been jewels among men and nobody shall be able to question their worth. They shall be confessed by all men to have been precious stones and pebbles, gold and dross.

Then will come up the next principle of open acknowledgment. They were the Lord's and they shall be acknowledged as such. "They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day." He Himself will declare the fact, for it is written, "He is not ashamed to call them Brethren," and in that day the Lord Jesus will say, "Here am I, and the children that You have given Me." Oh, what a joy it will be to be thus openly confessed by Jesus Himself! Now we are unknown if we are God's people, for the world knows us not because it knew not our Master Himself. We are dead and our life is hid with Christ in God. But when He who is our Life shall appear, then shall we, also, appear with Him in Glory! "Then shall your righteousness shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Then shall be carried out the principle that there is nothing hid which shall not be known and those who were secretly servants of the Lord shall have evidence of that fact read aloud before assembled worlds—and God, the judge of all—shall not be ashamed to declare, "They are Mine, they are My peculiar treasure."

But even in their case the principle of mercy will be conspicuous. I want you to notice very specially. "When I make up My jewels they shall be Mine, and I will spare them." *Sparing* applies to those who, under another mode of judgment, would not escape. Had it been a question of merit as under Law, they would have been doomed as well as others, but the Lord says, "I will spare them." O God, even though You have made Your chosen to be Your treasure, yet You do *spare* them, for the evidence does not prove them meritorious, but shows that they were saved in Christ Jesus and, therefore, taught to fear You. When the Apostle had received great kindness from a friend whom he had valued, he offered a prayer for him which you may be sure would be a very earnest and comprehensive one, but it was this—"The Lord have mercy upon him in that Day."

That is all we can expect and, blessed be God, it is all we need! The matter of justice is settled by our Great Substitute and to us mercy comes freely! The brightest saint that ever reflected the image of Christ on earth will have to be *saved* by *mercy* from first to last! "I will spare them," He

says, for He might have dealt otherwise with them had He taken them on grounds of Law and judged them apart from the mercy which flows through the atoning Sacrifice! True, they were jewels and they were the Lord's own treasure. But if He had laid up their sins as evidence, instead of their marks of Grace—if that Book of Remembrance which is written before Him had contained an account of their shortcomings and their transgressions as the basis of judgment—it would have gone otherwise with them. But now He calls to remembrance their godly fear, their sacred thoughts and their holy conversation and He spares them!

They will be dealt with on the principle of relationship, also. "I will spare them as a man spares his own that serves him." You spare your son when you know he is doing his best to serve you. He has made a blunder and if he had been a mere hired servant you might have been angry, but you say, "Ah, I know my boy was doing all he could and he will do better, soon, and therefore I cannot be severe. I see that he is imperfect, but I see equally well that he loves me and acts like a loving son." The word here used signifies pity or compassion, "Like as a father *pities* his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." He will at the last look upon us with a love which has pity mingled with it, for we shall need it in that Day. He will "remember that we are dust" and will accept us, though cognizant of all the faults there were and of all the infirmities that there had been.

He still will accept us because we are His own sons in Christ Jesus and, by His Grace, desire to serve Him. We do not serve Him to *become* sons, but because we *are* sons. It is a sweet name for a child of God—a son-servant—one who is a servant to his father and, therefore, because he is his son, serves not for wage, nor of compulsion, but out of love. Such service is mentioned as evidence of sonship and not as a claim—and we shall be saved through Grace, our holy service of sonship being the proof of that Grace..

Beloved, on these principles will God make the final division. He will say, "You are Mine—I chose you. You are My saints and there is a gracious excellence in you. I acknowledge you as Mine and I am not ashamed to do so, for you bear My Nature. I chose you in mercy and, in consequence of My having chosen you, I have made you to be My son-servants and so I accept your holy conversation as the token of your sincere love to Me and I receive you into My Glory to be Mine forever and ever.

IV. And now, lastly, comes the sure truth that THE SEPARATION, ITSELF, WILL BE CLEAR TO ALL. Then shall you mourn, you sorcerers and adulterers, you that oppress the hireling and turn aside the stranger from his right, you false swearers and enemies of God! You now can go on your way and say, "God cares nothing about righteous or wicked, He deals with all alike, or even smites His children worst of all." But you shall look another way, by-and-by. Compelled to turn your heads in another direction from that of this poor fleeting world, you shall see something that will astound you! For though you wish it not, even you and much more the godly shall then "discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves God and him that serves Him not." The division will be sharp and decisive!

Wherever you read in the Bible you find only two classes. You never read of *three*—you find the righteous and the wicked—him that fears God and him that fears Him not. A certain order of persons puzzle us in making division here below because we do not know to which party they belong. But when the Book of Remembrance is finished and shall be opened, there will be no sort of difficulty in knowing them—the two classes shall roll apart like the two portions of the Red Sea when Moses lifted up his rod—and there shall be a space between. On which side, my dear Hearer, you that are hesitating between two opinions—on which side will you be?

There will be no border land, no space for non-committal and neutrality—you will, then, be among the fearers of God or among those that fear not His name! Who may abide the day of His coming? That coming may be very speedy, for none of us knows the day nor the hour when the Son of Man shall appear. The separation will be sharp and decisive. There will be no undecided ones left. And it will obliterate a host of pretensions, for the day comes that shall burn as an oven and all the proud shall be as stubble. The Pharisee who thought he took his place among those that were the jewels of creation will find that the coming of the Lord will burn up his phylacteries and his broad hems—and utterly consume all his boasts as to fasting thrice in the week and taking mint and anise and cumin—for these things were never written in the Book, nor worth recording there.

What was put there was fearing the Lord and thinking upon His name and speaking one to another. Ceremonials and niceties of observance are not thought worth a stroke of the recording pen! There is nothing in the Book to act as evidence for the proud, but everything to condemn him! Therefore the Day shall burn him up and utterly consume him and his hopes! That division will be universal, for all they that do wickedly shall be as stubble, not one of them escaping. Though they hid their wickedness and bore a good name. Though they concealed their sin even from those who watched them. Though they entered the Church and gained honors in it as Judas did in the college of the Apostles, yet that Day shall discover all that do wickedly! Talk how they may and speak as they please, their outward conduct will be the index of their inner alienation from God—and in the hour of their judgment the fire shall consume them from off the earth!

Then shall both classes perceive that the distinction involves two very different fates. Once the righteous were in the fire and, according to the third chapter and the third verse, the Lord sat as a refiner and purified them in a furnace like silver! But now the tables are turned and the proud—and they that do wickedly—are in a more terrible fire! The Day shall burn as an oven! The righteous were profited by their fire, for they were good metal—and to part with the dross was no loss! But the wicked are such base metal that they shall utterly fail in the testing fire. The tables will be turned, again, for the righteous were under the feet of the wicked—they ridiculed and mocked them and called them “cants and hypocrites.”

But *then* the ungodly shall be laid low and the righteous shall tread them as ashes under their feet. The cause of evil will be a worn-out

thing—it will be burnt up and there will be nothing left of it upon the earth but memories of its former power and of the fire by which it perished. That Day comes and let the mighty ones among the sons of men who rebel against God know it! They shall no more be able to resist the terror of His Presence than the stubble is able to stand against the blazing fire. When they pine forever in the place where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched, they will know the God of Judgment and see how utterly He consumed them out of the land!

Look at the lot of the righteous. When Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shall arise upon the earth and gild it with His own light, there shall be a new Heaven and a new earth—and the righteous shall go forth and leap for joy like cattle which, before, had been penned in the stall! No works of the ungodly shall be left. As far as this world is concerned, they shall be utterly and altogether gone. There shall then be no tavern songs or ale-house ribaldry. There shall be no village profligate around whom shall gather the youth of the hamlet to be led away by his libidinous and blasphemous words. There shall then be no shameless reviler who shall provide a hall where blasphemers may congregate to try which can utter the blackest profanities against the Lord of Hosts. There shall be no shrine of virgin, or of saint, or idol, or image, or crucifix. Superstition shall be swept away!

There shall be no congregations where pretended preachers of the Gospel shall deal out new philosophies and suggest newly invented skepticisms, or which at least they *hoped* men would accept as *new*, though they were the old errors of the past picked off the dunghill upon which they had been thrown by disgusted ages! Sin shall all be gone and not a trace of it shall be left! But here shall dwell righteousness and peace! The meek shall inherit the earth and the saints shall stand, each one in his lot, for the Lord Himself shall reign gloriously among His ancients! From every hill and every vale shall come up the one song of Glory unto the Most High and every heart that beats shall magnify His name, who at last has answered the question, “Where is the God of Judgment?”

Then, cast into the nethermost Hell, in the place appointed for the devil and his angels, the ungodly shall never ask again, “Where is the God of Judgment?” And saints, triumphant in their Lord, with whom they shall reign forever in eternity, shall also perceive that He, “discerns between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves God and him that serves Him not.” Beloved Hearer, where? O where will you be? Where shall I be in that Day?

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“THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS”

NO. 1020

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 12, 1871,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“In them has He set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the Heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.”
Psalm 19:4, 5, 6.*

*“The Sun of Righteousness.”
Malachi 4:2.*

WE should feel quite justified in applying the language of the 19th Psalm to our Lord Jesus Christ from the simple fact that He is so frequently compared to the sun. And especially in the passage which we have given you as our second text, wherein He is called “the Sun of Righteousness.” But we have a higher justification for such a reading of the passage, for it will be in your memories that in the 10th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle Paul, slightly altering the words of this Psalm, applies them to the Gospel and the preachers thereof. “Have they not heard?” said he, “Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.” So that what was here spoken of the sun by David, is referred by Paul to the Gospel, which is the light streaming from Jesus Christ, “the Sun of Righteousness.”

We can never err if we allow the New Testament to interpret the Old—comparing spiritual things with spiritual is a good mental and spiritual exercise for us. And I feel, therefore, that we shall not be guilty of straining the text at all when we take the language of David in relation to the sun and use it in reference to our Lord Jesus Christ. Do not your hearts often say, “What shall we do, or what shall we say to render honor unto our Redeemer?” Have you not often felt confounded as to what offering you shall bring to Him? If you had been possessor of all the worlds, you would have laid them at His feet. If the universe had been your heritage, you would cheerfully have resigned it to Him, and felt happy in stripping yourself of everything, that He might be rendered the more glorious by your sacrifice.

Since you have not all this wealth, have you not again and again asked of your soul—

*“Oh what shall I do,
My Savior to praise?”*

I would write the best of poems if so I could extol Him, but the faculty is not in me. I would sing the sweetest of songs, and compose the most melting music, if I could, and count art, and wit, and music exalted by being handmaidens to Him. But how shall I adore Him, before whom the best

music on earth must be but discord? And how shall I set Him forth, the very skirts of whose garments are bright with insufferable light? At such times you have looked the whole world through to find metaphors to heap upon Him. You have culled all the fair flowers of Nature, and made them into garlands to cast at His feet. And you have gathered all earth’s gems and precious things to crown His head, but you have been disappointed with the result, and have cried out with our poet—

**“The whole creation can afford
But some faint shadows of my Lord.
Nature, to make His beauties known,
Must mingle colors not her own.”**

At such times, while ransacking land, and sea, and sky for metaphors, you have probably looked upon the sun, and have said—“This great orb, the lord of light and lamp of day, is like my Savior. It is the faint image of His excellent Glory whose countenance shines as the sun in its strength.” You have done well to seize on such a figure. What Milton calls the golden-tressed sun is the most glorious object in creation, and in Jesus the fullness of Glory dwells. The sun is at the same time the most influential of existences, acting upon the whole world, and truly our Lord is, in the deepest sense, “of this great world both eye and soul.” He, “with benignant ray sheds beauty, life, and joyance from above.”

The sun is, moreover, the most abiding of creatures. And therein it is also a type of Him who remains from generation to generation, and is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The king of day is so vast and so bright that the human eye cannot bear to gaze upon him. We delight in his beams, but we should be blinded should we continue to peer into his face. Even yet more brilliant is our Lord, for as God, He is a consuming fire—but He deigns to smile upon us with milder beams as our Brother and Redeemer.

Jesus, like the sun, is the center and soul of all things, the fullness of all good, the lamp that lights us, the fire that warms us, the magnet that guides and controls us. He is the source and fountain of all life, beauty, fruitfulness, and strength. He is the Fosterer of tender herbs of penitence, the Quickener of the vital sap of Grace, the Ripener of fruits of holiness, and the Life of everything that grows within the garden of the Lord. Whereas to adore the sun would be idolatry—it were treason not to worship ardently the Divine Sun of Righteousness. Jesus Christ is the great, the glorious, the infinitely blessed. Even the sun fails to set Him forth—but, as it is one of the best figures we can find, it is ours to use this day. We will think of Jesus as the Sun this morning—first *as in the text*. Secondly, *as He is to us*. And then, thirdly, for a few minutes, *we will bask in His beams*.

I. First, then, we will contemplate Jesus AS THE SUN IN THE TEXT. Note how the passage begins—“In them has He set a tabernacle for the sun.” Kings were accustomed in their pompous progresses through their dominions to have canopies of splendor borne aloft over them so that marching in the midst of their glittering soldiery they were, themselves, the main attraction of the gorgeous pageant. Our Lord Jesus Christ in His Church is, as it were, traversing the heavens in a majestic tabernacle,

and, like the sun, scattering His beams among men. The Redeemer is canopied by the adoration of His saints, for He “inhabits the praises of Israel.”

He is, from day to day, advancing in His glorious march through the universe, conquering and to conquer, and He will journey onward till the dispensation shall terminate and the Gospel age shall be closed by His second advent. When the text says that there is a tabernacle set for the sun in the firmament, we are reminded of Christ as dwelling in the highest heavens. He is not alone the Christ of ancient history, but He is the Christ of today. Think not always of Him as the lowly Man despised and rejected, as nailed to the Cross, or buried in the tomb. He is not here, for He is risen, but He still exists, not as a dream or phantom, but as the real Christ.

Doubt it not, for up yonder, in the seventh Heaven, the Lord has set a tabernacle for the Sun of Righteousness. There Jesus abides in splendor inconceivable, the Joy and Glory of all those blessed spirits who, having believed in Him on the earth, have come to behold Him in the heavens—

**“Bright, like a sun, the Savior sits,
And spreads eternal noon.
No evenings there, nor gloomy nights,
To want the feeble moon.”**

That Jesus lives is a deep well of consolation to the saints, and did we always remember it our hearts would not be troubled. If we always remembered that Jesus both lives and reigns, our joys would never wither. We worship Him, it is true, as one who was slain and has redeemed us unto God by His blood. But we also extol Him as one who is “alive forever more, and has the keys of death and of Hell.”

Let your faith today behold Jesus sitting at the right hand of God, even the Father. He sits there because His atoning work is done, and He is receiving the infinite reward which His Father promised Him. He is exalted as a King upon His Throne until His enemies are made His footstool. He dwells within His tabernacle of praise, adored and admired by angels and glorified spirits. He sits there, not as a weary one, feeble and exhausted, but with the keys of universal monarchy at His girdle, for “the government is upon His shoulder, and His name is called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God.”

I want you fully to grasp the thought of the living Savior—of the Sun in His tabernacle in the highest heavens, for this must be the fulcrum upon which we shall work this morning. We shall get our leverage here—the living Savior, the mighty Savior, the reigning Savior. He is the Church’s Joy and Hope in the present and for all years to come. The text proceeds to speak of Jesus as the Sun, and describes Him, first, as *a Bridegroom coming out of His chamber*. A beautiful description, indeed, of the sun when he rises in the early morning. He comes forth from the vast obscure, as from within a secret chamber. He withdraws the veil of night, and floods the earth with fluid gold. From curtains of purple and vermillion, he looks forth, and scatters orient pearl around him. Clad with a blaze of glory, he begins the race of day.

Thus our Lord Jesus Christ, when He rose from the dead, was as the sun unveiling itself. He came forth from the sepulcher as a bridegroom from his chamber. Observe that dear name of bridegroom. The Lord of Heaven and earth, between whom and us there was an infinite distance, has deigned to take our humanity into union with Himself of the most intimate kind. Among men there is no surer mode of making peace between two contending parties than for a marriage to be established between them. It has often been done so, and thus wars have been ended, and alliances have been established.

The Prince of Peace on Heaven’s side condescends to be married to our nature, that from now on Heaven and earth may be as one. Our Lord came as the Bridegroom of His Church out of His chamber when He was born of the virgin and was revealed to the shepherds and the wise men of the east. Yet, in a certain sense, He still continued in His chamber as a Bridegroom all His life, for He was hidden and veiled. The Jewish world knew not their King—though He spoke openly in their streets and sought not mystery—yet He was unknown, they did not discern Him. And in some respects He did not, then, desire to be discerned, for He often bade His disciples to tell no man what was done. That was the time when the Bridegroom was in His chamber, being made perfect through suffering and perfectly conformed unto His Church, hearing her sicknesses and her sorrows, suffering her wants, enduring her shame, and thus completing the marriage union between the two.

To this end He actually descended by dark steps of anguish into the silent inner room of the grave, and there He slept in His chamber, perfectly wedded to His Church. Come and look at Him, you who admire the Lover of your souls—He stooped to death and the sepulcher because manhood had fallen under their yoke. His Church was subject to death, and He must die. She deserved to suffer the penalty due to God’s insulted Law, and, therefore, Jesus bowed His head to the stroke—

**“Yes, said the Son, with her I’ll go
Through all the depths of sin and woe.
And on the Cross will even dare
The bitter pains of death to bear.”**

And He did bear them, and in the darksome chamber of the tomb He proved how true a Bridegroom He was to His Church. Before His great race began, of which we are soon to speak, it behooved our mighty Champion to descend into the lowest parts of the earth and sleep among the dead. Before every day there is a night where darkness seems to triumph. It behooved Christ to suffer, and then to rise again. His descent was necessary to His ascent—His sojourn in the chamber to His race and victory.

Thus I have introduced to you the prelude of the race—the Bridegroom in His chamber. Now observe *the coming out of it*. The sun comes forth, at the appointed hour, from the gates of day, and begins to gladden the earth. Even so on the third day, early in the morning, Jesus, our Lord, arose from His sleep and there was a great earthquake, for the angel of the Lord descended from Heaven and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulcher. Then did the Sun of Righteousness arise. Then did the great Bridegroom come forth from His chamber and begin His joyful race.

It must have been a ravishing sight to have beheld the risen Savior—well might the disciples hold Him by the feet and worship Him. I think if ever angels sung more sweetly at one time than another, it must have been on that first Easter morning when they saw the Divine Champion break His bonds of death asunder and rise into the glorious resurrection life. Then was He revealed to the sons of men. And, no longer hidden, He began to tell His disciples the meaning of those enigmas which had been dark to them—things which they had not understood—which seemed inexplicable, were all opened up by Him, for now was His time to come out of His chamber.

His words, though plain enough, had aforesaid hidden Him even from those who loved Him. But now He speaks no more in proverbs, but shows them openly concerning Himself and the Father. He has laid aside the incognito in which He traversed the earth as a stranger, and He is now Divinely familiar with His friends, bidding them even touch His hands and His side. In His death the veil was rent, and in His resurrection the High Priest came forth in His robes of Glory and beauty. In a little while He was gone away, but He returned from the secret chambers of the ivory palaces, and showed Himself unto His disciples.

Blessed were the eyes that saw Him in that day. Though during the forty days in which our Lord lingered among His followers upon earth we may truly say that He had come out of His chamber, we perceive that He more fully did so when, after the forty days had been accomplished, He took His disciples to the top of Olivet and there ascended into Heaven, out of their sight. Then had the Sun, indeed, ascended above the horizon to make His glories stream along the heavens! See you not the angelic bands poising themselves upon the wing in mid-air, waiting until He shall return all glowing with the victory after the long and deadly fight? Mark you well that matchless spectacle as He is “seen of angels.”—

***“The helmed cherubim
And sworded seraphim
Are seen in glittering ranks,
With wings displayed.”***

They have hastened to meet the Prince of Glory, and attend Him to His ancient patrimony. Right glad are all the heavenly band to welcome back the Captain of the Lord’s Host, and, therefore, they harp in loud and solemn choir to Heaven’s triumphant Heir. As for the glorified of mortal race, redeemed of old by His blood which in the fullness of time was shed, they hail Him with most glad hymn, and lift up their sweetest symphonies to extol Him who finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness! Then the Bridegroom came out of His chamber with fit marriage music—His beauties hidden awhile in the chamber, where He was regarded as without form or comeliness—He blazed forth with renewed splendor, such as confounded both sun and moon.

In another respect, Christ came out of His chamber at His ascension, because, when He ascended on high, leading captivity captive, He received and gave gifts for men. The gifts were intended for the manifestation of Himself. His Church, which is His body, was by His own command sitting, still, in the chamber, tarrying till power was given. But, on a sudden the

Bridegroom’s power was felt, for there was heard the sound as of a rushing mighty wind which filled all the place, and then descending upon each favored head came the cloven tongue, and straightway you could see that the Bridegroom had come out of His chamber, for the multitude in the street began to hear His voice.

It was Peter that spoke, we say, but far rather was it Christ, the Bridegroom, who spoke by Peter. It was the Sun, from the chambers of the east, bursting through the clouds, and beginning to shine on Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and Rome, and Egypt, and making the multitudes in far-off lands to see the day which Prophets and kings had waited for, but which had never visited their eyes. Do you hear the joyful motion among the people—the joy mingled with the sorrows of repentance? This is the singing of birds, and these the dew-drops which hail the rising Sun.

The people cry, “What must we do to be saved?” The shadows are fleeing. They believe in Jesus, and are baptized into His name—the true light is shining. Three thousand souls are added in one day to the Church, for truly the Bridegroom is awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouts by reason of wine (Psa. 78:65)! Then was the Gospel race commenced with a glorious burst of strength, such as only our champion could have displayed. Meditate at your leisure upon this first general manifestation of our Lord to the general multitude. He had not gone out of Israel before. “I am not sent,” said He, “save to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.” Palestine was His chamber—He went to the windows of it, and looked forth on Tyre and Sidon wistfully.

But He had not come forth of His chamber till that day when the Gospel began to be preached to the Gentiles, also. And in fulfillment of the gift of Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured out upon all flesh, the Apostles went everywhere preaching the Word of God. When even we, the dwellers in the far off northern isles, received the Gospel, then, indeed, had the Bridegroom come forth out of His chamber!

But enough of this, or time will fail me. After the coming forth, we have to consider in the text *His course*. The course of Jesus has been as that of the sun, or like that of a mighty champion girded for running. Notice, under this head, *His continuance*. Our Lord’s Gospel has been no meteor that flashed for a while and then passed away, but it has remained as the sun in the heavens. What systems of philosophy have come and gone since on Calvary the Christ of God was lifted up? What speculations, what lo-heres and lo-theres have shone forth, have dazzled fools, and have been quenched in the night since He left the chamber of His marriage? Yet He continues still the same.

Nor, Brothers and Sisters, are there any marks of decrepitude either in Him or in His Gospel. They tell us that the idolatry of Hindustan is evidently crumbling—it falls not yet, but it is worm-eaten through and through. Equally sure is it that the false prophet holds but a feeble swath among his followers, and we can all see that though popery makes desperate efforts, and its extremities are vigorous, yet it is paralyzed at its heart, and the Vatican is made to feel that its time of power is short. As

for the Gospel, it wears the dew of its youth after eighteen centuries of struggles. And it predominates most in those young nations which have evidently a history before them.

The old systems are now most favored by those nations which are left behind in the race of civilization, but the peoples whom God has made quick by nature are those to whom He has given to be receptive of His Grace. There are grand days coming for the Church of God! Voltaire said that he lived in the twilight of Christianity—and so he did, but it was the twilight of the morning—not the twilight of the evening. Glory be unto God, the little cloud the size of a man’s hand is spreading! It begins to cover the heavens, and the day is not far distant when the sound of abundance of rain shall be heard.

Christ was not a strong man who bounded forth at a leap, and then put forth no more strength. He rejoiced to continue His work, and to run His race. He was not a shooting star that sparkles for a moment, but a sun that shall shine throughout the livelong day. Note next in this metaphor *the unity of our Lord’s course*, for it is clear in the text—“Rejoicing as a strong man to run the race.” A race is one thing—there is the one goal—and the man gathers up his strength to reach it. He has nothing else to think of. They may throw the golden apples in his road, but he does not observe them. They may sound harp and sackbut to the right, and breathe the lute or sweeter instruments of music to the left, but he is deaf to all.

He has a race to run, and he throws his whole strength into it. This is a fit image of our Lord. He has never turned aside, He has never been compelled to retrace His steps, to revise His doctrine, to amend His system, or change His tactics. On, on, on has the course of Jesus been, shining more and more unto the perfect day. A certain people, nowadays, who yet dare to call themselves Christians are always hankering after something new, pining for novelties, and boasting of their fresh discoveries. Though, indeed, their fresh things are only fragments of broken images of heresies, which our fathers dashed to shivers centuries ago. The great thinkers of the present day are nothing more than mere translators—you know the London meaning of that word—buyers of old shoes who patch them up, and send them forth again as if they were something new.

Old shoes and clothes are common enough among those Gibeonites who would deceive Israel, and whose boast is that they have come from far and bring us treasures of wisdom from remote regions. Sirs, we want not your new things, for our Lord’s race is the same as of old, and as He continues in one course so also will we. To spread righteousness and, in so doing, to save sinners and to glorify God—this is the one purpose of Christ—from it He will never cease, and nothing shall ever tempt Him from the pursuit of it. Look, I pray you, with pleasure and see how our Lord, from His first coming out of His chamber until now has continued still in the Gospel to shine forth with rays of glory, without variableness or shadow of a turning.

Though *we* believe not, He abides faithful, He cannot deny Himself. He changes not in work or way. For Zion’s sake He works up to now, and the

pleasure of the Lord prospers in His hand. But now, observe next, the notable idea of *strength* which the text conveys to us. "Rejoicing as a strong man to run his race." It is no drudgery for the ascended Lord to carry on His cause—

***"The baffled prince of Hell
In vain new efforts tries,
Truth's empire to repel
By cruelty and lies.
The infernal gates shall rage in vain
Conquest awaits the Lamb once slain."***

There is a race to be run but Jesus is strong enough for it. He does not come panting up to the starting place and from there go creeping on. But like a strong man He surveys the course. He knows that He is equal to it, and, therefore He delights in it. When He began His race He was opposed, but the opposition only made Him triumph the more readily, for "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word."

When our Lord arose like the sun, the clouds were thick and heavy, but He painted their fleecy skirts with gold. Persecution hung over the eastern horizon, but He turned it into the imperial purple of His Sovereignty. As He pursued His course the ice of centuries melted, the dense gloom of ages disappeared. No chains could bind Him, and no bonds could hold Him. He dashed on with undiminished energy, and the gates of Hell could not prevail. As no cloud has ever stayed the sun as he has "whirled his car along the ethereal plain," so no difficulties impeded the onward course of the Gospel in the days of its dawning. To the first days of the Church, Thomson's lines to the sun are fully applicable—

***"Now, flaming up the heavens, the potent sun
Melts into limpid air the high-raised clouds,
And morning fogs, that hovered round the hills,
In party-colored bands, till wide, unveiled,
The face of Nature shines, from where earth seems
Far stretched around, to meet the bending sphere."***

The Gospel soon shed its light in every land, and all nations felt its benign power. Men ceased to persecute and bowed before the Cross. Soon fresh clouds arose, and the Church passed through them. Errors and heresies multiplied. Filthy dreamers led away a huge apostasy. Rome became the mother of harlots and abominations, but the true Church, and the true Christ within her, went right on. The Church was not less triumphant in her second trial than in her first.

Papal Rome was overcome as surely as pagan Rome. Popes were no more her conquerors than bloody emperors had been of yore. To the thoughtful eye the Sun of Christ is not less bright over the valleys of Piedmont than over the waves of the sea which bore Paul and his fellow Apostles. The Champion's race was as eager and as triumphant as before. Since then, dense banks of spiritual deadness and false teaching have barred the visible heavens and have appeared to mortal sight an ebony wall impenetrable as steel, but the Lord reigns.

He that sits in the heavens does laugh—the Lord does have them in derision. Strong is His right hand, and His enemies shall be broken. On goes the Sun of Righteousness—nothing impedes Him—His tabernacle is above

them all. He rides on the heavens, yes, He rides on the wings of the wind. Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength. Christ has failed in nothing. The decrees have been executed. The eternal purposes have been fulfilled. The elect have been saved—His kingdom is established—and shall continue as long as the sun. Who shall stay His hand? Who shall resist His will?

Observe, therefore, how the force is coupled with *joy*. Weakness brings sorrow, but strength begets joy. Christ is always glad and He would have His people rejoice, for His cause goes right on and He shall not fail nor be discouraged. He rejoices as He divides the spoil with the strong. When a man has a task to do which is easy to him, and which he can readily perform, he sings at his work. And so this day does Christ rejoice over His Church with joy, and triumph over her with singing. His cause goes on in spite of foes, and His strength is so great that even the battle fills Him with delight.

I remember to have heard a Welsh preacher make use of the following simile. He was speaking of the joy of Christ in Heaven, and he said, “You tell me that the Church is sorrowful on earth and I tell you that Christ is joyous in Heaven. And then you ask me how this can be? You see yonder mother with her babe, and she is washing the child. Its face is foul and she desires to see it shine with brightness. She would see it white as the marble mingled with the redness of the rose. Therefore she washes it—but the child cries. It is fretful and knows not what is good for it—so it whines and struggles. The mother does not cry, or share its sorrow, she keeps on singing because she knows that all is right and that her darling will smile like a cherub when all is over. She sees the good results coming, while the babe only feels the present discomfort, so she sings her song and never stops, let the child cry as it may.”

And so the Lord Jesus has pleasure in His work. He is purifying His Church, and making her fit to be presented to Himself, and though she winces and laments, it is the flesh that makes her to do so. The Lord sings still joyously because He sees the end from the beginning! Earth may be swathed in mist, but the Sun is never so, He shines gloriously evermore. The text mentions one other fact connected with Jesus as the Sun—“*There is nothing hid from the heat thereof;*” by which is meant nothing is able to escape the powerful influence of Christ Jesus. His own chosen people must, in due season, feel His power to save.

They may wander as they do, and sin as they may—but when the time appointed comes they shall be redeemed out of the land of the enemy. The sun’s power is felt in the dark and deepest mines. That there is a sun still shining might be discoverable even in the heart of the earth! And so, in the dark haunts of sin, God’s elect shall be made to feel the Sovereign power and Omnipotent Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. When you and I shall die, and when we shall be buried in the grave, we shall not there be hid from the heat of this Sun of Righteousness. By-and-by He shall kindle life within our bones again. He shall create a soul within the ribs of death, and we shall spring upward as the grass, and as the willows by the water-courses when the sun renews the year.

Our dry bones shall live, and in our flesh we shall we see God. Meanwhile, while the gracious operations of Christ thus fall on all His elect, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof, other operations are at work on all the sons of men. He rules in Providence over all people, whether they believe in Him or not, and if men do not accept the Gospel, yet they are affected by it in some way or other. Even the dark parts of the world feel something of the Presence of the Christ of God. Responsibility is heaped on those that hear of Him and reject Him. He becomes a savor of death unto death where He is not a savor of life unto life. There is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

Oh, how this ought to encourage you Christian people to work! The Lord has gone before you—there is nothing hid from the heat of His Presence. Jesus is King of the dark settlements of the heathen, and He reigns in the lowest haunts of London’s vice. Go there, for you are not intruders. You have a right to go anywhere in your Master’s dominions. And the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof. Be not afraid to face the vilest blasphemer, or the most foul-mouthed infidel, for Christ is Master—and if you bring the Gospel before His enemy—he will be made to feel its power, either so as to yield to it a willing submission, or else to be condemned by it.

In either case, you shall have done your part, and uttered your testimony, and freed your head of his blood. In these thoughts combined, we see Christ Jesus, the risen Savior, pursuing His ever glorious course till He shall descend again the second time to take His people to Himself to reign with Him.

II. Very briefly, indeed, in the second place. Let us think for a moment of JESUS AS A SUN TO US. Worship and bless our Savior! It is ever meet and right to do so. Let Him be extolled and be very high. Some would give Him a secondary place, let it never be so with us. As the sun is the center, so is Christ. As the sun is the great motor, the first source of motive power, so is Christ to His people. As the sun is the fountain from which light, life, and heat perpetually flow, so is the Savior. As the sun is the fructifier by which fruits multiply and ripen, so is Christ—and as the sun is the regulator and rules the day, and marks the seasons—even so is Jesus owned as Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Think these thoughts over in the following respects. When you take the *Bible* remember that Christ is the center of the Scriptures. Do not put election in the center. Some do, and they make a one-sided system. Do not put man in the center—some do, and they fall into grievous errors. Christ is the center of the entire system of the Gospel, and all will be seen to move with regularity when you perceive that He is the chief fixed point. You cannot be right in the rest unless you think rightly of Him. He is the center and King of all Truth. He is the center of the *Church*, too. Not the pastor, not the Church itself, not any rule or government, no bishop, no priest, and no Pope can be our center—Christ alone is our central sun.

We follow as planets where He leads the way—around Him we revolve, but we own no other Lord. Let it be so in *the world* that even there Christ governs and is the center of all history. You will understand history better

when you know this—for this is the key of the world’s story—the reason for the rise and fall of empires. You shall understand all things when you know Immanuel, God with us. And let Him have this place in *your hearts*. There enthrone Him! Establish Him as the central sun, and let Him rule your entire being, enlightening your understanding, warming your hearts, filling all your powers, passions, and faculties with the fullness of His Presence. To have Christ in us, the hope of Glory—oh, what blessedness! But let us take care that it is so, for we know not Christ aright unless we give Him such a place in our hearts as the sun occupies in God’s world.

III. But time fails me, and we must now pass on to the last point, and let us for a minute or two BASK IN HIS BEAMS. How shall we do it? First, we must *realize that He Is*. Sinner, saint, Christ lives—He who trod the wave of Galilee lives on! He who was marked with the nails rules on! Oh, Sinner, does not that comfort you? The Savior lives! The Redeemer lives! He who forgives sins still lives. Saint, does not this comfort you? The Man of the tender heart still lives—with a bosom still to be leaned upon—and with lips still ready to speak endearing words. There is a tabernacle for the Sun—He is not extinct. He shines still, He blesses still. Bask in His beams, then, by realizing that He Is.

Then come and *lay your souls beneath His Divine influence*. O my Soul, if you are guilty, come and rest in His Atonement. If you are unrighteous come and take His righteousness. If you are feeble lay hold upon His strength. If you can not pray, accept Him as your Intercessor. If you are in yourself nothing, take Him to be your All in All. Some creatures delight to warm themselves in the sun, but oh, what a pleasure it is to sun oneself in the Presence of Christ. Never mind how little I am, how nothing I am, how vile I am, how foul I am. All I am He has taken to Himself, and all He has belongs to me. I sin, but He has taken all my sin—He is righteous and all His righteousness is mine. I am feeble, He is mighty—His mightiness is mine, I wrap myself in His Omnipotence.

Christ is All and Christ is *mine*. Why, I utterly fail when trying to talk about such things as these—talking is but stuttering on such a theme! Faith must enjoy, rather than express, her delight. Come, plunge, all of you, into this sea of sweetness—dive deep into this abyss of happiness—Christ Jesus is yours forever and forever! The sun is very great but it is all for me, and Christ is very bright and glorious, and He is all my own.

Then next, if you would sun yourself in His beams, *imbibe the joy of His strength*. He is like a bridegroom rejoicing to run his race. Now, Brothers and Sisters, I am often afraid, lest in serving God, we should grow dispirited and downcast, and think that things are not going on as they should. Remember, the joy of the Lord is your strength. If you begin to say, “Our cause is very feeble, the Gospel will not prevail among us,” you will slacken your efforts. Do not so, but remember that Jesus Christ does not fret or sadden Himself about His kingdom. He runs with full strength and rejoices as He runs. And I bid you, in the power of the Holy Spirit, do the same. Cast away your doubts and fears, the kingdom is the Lord’s, and He will deliver His adversaries into your hands.

I fret and worry myself, sometimes, about these inventors of new doctrines, and those Ritualists who bring up the old rates and stale tallow of the past ages. Let us fret no more, but think that these are only like the clouds to the great sun. The Gospel will still proceed in its career. Let us laugh the enemies of God to scorn and defy them to their faces. They defy the Lord God of Israel as did the Philistine of old, but God Himself is mightier than they, and the victory is sure to the true Church and to the Gospel of His Son. Be very courageous! Be not alarmed with sudden fear! Trust in Jehovah, for the Lord will surely give unto His own servants the victory in the day of battle.

And Brethren, if you would sun yourselves in Christ's beams, let me bid you *reflect His light* whenever you receive it. He is the Sun and you are the planet, but every planet shines, shines with borrowed light. It conceals no light, but sends back to other worlds what the sun has given to it. Cast back on men the light which Jesus gives you. Triumph in Christ's circuit—that it is so broad as to comprehend the world, and compass all time. Enlarge your own hearts, and let your light shine far and wide, believing that the power of God which gives you light will go with the light which you reflect.

Comfort your hearts! “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.” Who shall stop the Christ of God in His race? Let him first go pluck the sun from his sphere. Who shall stay the champion of God who has girt Himself for His race? Whoever comes in His way, woe unto him, for if Samson smote a thousand men hip and thigh, what shall our Immortal Samson do? Let all the armies of Pope and devil come against Him, He will utterly defy them, and drive them like chaff before the wind.

Sing you unto His name, for He has triumphed gloriously! Begin the everlasting song, for He is the Lord and God, and to the uttermost ages shall He reign! Yes, forever and ever is He priest and King. God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 19.

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THE RISING SUN

NO. 1463B

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

***“But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness
arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth,
and grow up as calves of the stall.”
Malachi 4:2.***

THE Jews expected that the coming of the Messiah would exalt every one of the Israelite race. Their expectations were great, but they were also carnal and sensuous since they looked for an *earthly* king who would make the despised nation victorious over all its enemies and enrich every man of Abraham's race. The Scriptures gave them no ground for such universal expectations, but quite the reverse. In the chapter which is now before us the Prophet explains that the coming of Christ would certainly be like the rising of the sun, full of glory and of brightness, but the results would not be the same to *all*. To those who thought that they were righteous and despised others, but who were wicked in their conversation—the rising of that sun would bring a burning, withering day.

Read the first verse. “The day comes that shall burn as an oven and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble.” They shall not be like plants full of sap that would flourish in the tropical heat, but like stubble which becomes drier and drier until it takes fire—“and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord, that it shall leave them neither root nor stock,” for so might it be translated, and then the figure would be congruous throughout. It would scorch up the stubble in which there was no life, so intense would be the heat. Now that *was* the consequence of Christ's coming. The religion of the Jews at His coming was dry and dead, like stubble.

The Pharisee thought that he was righteous because he put on a broad phylactery, tithed anise and mint, cumin and such trifles. The Sadducee thought much of himself because he was a man of common sense, a thinker, a rationalist. And other sects of that period found equally frivolous grounds for glorying. The ministry of Christ dried them right up and they have ceased to be. We use the name of Pharisee and Sadducee today, but there is no person in the world who would like to wear either name!

The result of Christ's coming, by His Spirit as well as by His personal Advent, is always much the same. Should the Spirit of God visit this Church with revival it will not have an equally beneficial effect upon all. To some, the rising of this Sun will bring healing and blessing; but to others it will bring scorching and withering. Know you not that the summer which fills the corn and makes it hang its golden head, blushing in very modesty for the blessing which has come upon it, fetches up also the noxious weeds from their secret lairs?

Tares gather encouragement from the sun as well as does the wheat and so the bad come to their ripeness as well as the good. But the ripe-

ness of that which is bad is only a hurrying on to destruction—the dryness of the stubble is the preparation for its being utterly consumed. We may well pray for revival, but we must not suppose that to the mere formalist a revival will bring a blessing. It may possibly disgust him and drive him from religion altogether. He will discover that he has no true religion as he sees the work of the Spirit of God around him and so the day of the Lord will, to him, “burn as an oven”—and being proud and at the same time doing wickedly, his empty profession of religion will consume like the stubble.

The coming of the Messiah was to bring to another class a fullness of blessing and it is of these we have to speak. “But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise,” not with scorching, but, “with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth”—you shall not be dried up, burnt and destroyed—but you shall “grow up as calves of the stall.” You shall obtain great blessings through the Presence of your Lord! Two things will take up our attention. The first is, *the description of the people of God*—“Unto you that fear My name.” And the second is, *the blessing which is promised to them*—“the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.”

I. Here are TRUE SAINTS DESCRIBED. Let us look at them. The description may be divided into two parts. First, here is their abiding character—they fear the name of the Lord—and secondly, we gather from the text their Providential character, a character which is not always theirs, but into which they sometimes fall, namely, that they need *healing*, for were they not sick there would be no need of the promise that the Sun of Righteousness should arise upon them with healing in His wings!

Notice then, first, *their abiding character*—they fear the name of the Lord. I am delighted to think that this promise is given to this particular character, for it thus comes to beginners in Grace. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”—it is not the highest Grace, nor the loftiest attainment of the spiritual nature. Bless the Lord, therefore, you weak and feeble ones, that the promise is given to you! You fear the Lord. There are times when we ask ourselves whether we know the rapture of love and we greatly question whether we ever had the assurance of faith, but even then, we know that we have an awe of God.

Jonah in the ship was in a very sinful state of mind and was fleeing from God, but yet he did not hesitate to say, “I am an Hebrew and I fear the Lord.” This is the abiding character of the saints in their worst state. If they backslide, they still fear the name of the Lord. They fear it at times very slavishly, with the spirit of bondage, but they fear it. They lose the evidence of their sonship and they cease to walk in the light, but they still have a fear of the Most High—they do not treat Him lightly, they could not sin against Him cheaply—there is still within their hearts a sense of His greatness.

It generally assumes the form of a reverence of His Person. They know there is a God and they are sure that He made the heavens and the earth. They are equally clear that He is everywhere present, marking the ways of men. Others may blaspheme, but they cannot; others may sin and make merry with it, but sin costs them dear; others may feast themselves with-

out apprehension, but they cannot, for they fear the Lord. I know that this expresses all true religion and has a very comprehensive meaning, but it suits my purpose just now to view it as a description of Believers, which is true of them all, into whatever state they may come. They still fear the Lord.

Now, Soul, do you *tremble* before God? There is something in that. I do not ask you whether you tremble at Hell. That were no sign of Grace, for what thief will not tremble at the gallows? I do not ask you if you are afraid of death. What mortal man is not, unless he has a good hope through Divine Grace? But do you tremble in the Presence of God because you have offended Him? And do you tremble in the presence of sin lest you should offend Him? Does it ever come over you thus—"How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Just as some men are kept back from crime by the fear of the law, are you kept back from folly by the fear of God? Just as some are impelled to energy by the fear of poverty, so are you impelled to the Divine service by a sense of the fact that not to serve Him is to abide under His wrath?

It is a low and small matter compared with the higher Graces which God works in His people, but it is still a precious thing to tremble, even, at His Word. I am glad to think that many of you have lately begun to fear God. I bless His name that you cannot live, now, as you once did. You are uneasy in your former careless way. I am right glad of it and though I cannot be sure that this fear may not be a slavish fear, yet I hope for the best and pray that it may ripen into that real fear of God which is always a work of Grace in the soul, so that the promise of our text may belong to you.

Now, Beloved, I have said that the description which is here given of the people of God denotes not only their abiding character, that they fear the Lord, but it also mentions their *occasional* character. They sometimes fall into a condition which they deplore and the text intimates this, first, by the fact that the Sun of Righteousness is to arise upon them, for this implies that they were in the dark until then. Whatever other light there may be, we, every one of us, know that until the sun rises our condition is one of comparative darkness.

There are children of God who walk in darkness, *dear* children of God, too. Indeed, I am inclined to think that every child of God gets into the dark sometimes. Some begin with brightness and then they get a cloudy time in the middle of their experience; while others have their worst darkness at last. Knox and Luther had their sharpest temptations when they came to die. It has been well said that God sometimes puts His children to bed in the dark. It does not matter, for they wake up in the light—in the eternal morning! But a dark season usually happens to us somewhere between the new birth and Heaven—perhaps to make the brightness all the brighter when the night shall be forever ended.

Are you in the dark at this moment, dear Brother, and are you wondering at it because everybody else seems so lively in their religion? Dear Sister, does it seem to you as if, though you have been a Believer for years, you were never in a worse state than now, while others are rejoicing? Then ask yourself—Do you still fear the Lord? Is your soul humbled in the

Presence of His majesty and have you a desire for His Glory? Never despair! The Sun shall rise upon you soon! Very clear is it from the text, too, that the children of God may sometimes be in ill health, for the Sun of Righteousness is to arise upon them with *healing* in His wings—which would not be so necessary a promise if they were not sick.

A Christian may be bowed down with grievous spiritual maladies. His pulse may beat slowly; his heart may become feeble; he may be alive and that may be about all. Lethargy may seize him, palsy may make him tremble despondently. He may have wandered from his God. Alas, even a feverish fit may be upon him, in which he shakes with unbelief from head to foot! It may be his eyes have become so blinded that he cannot see afar off and his ears may be dull of hearing. He may be like the fools in the Psalm, whose souls abhorred all manner of meat.

He may have put away from him the comforts of the promises and he may be brought very low—yet he shall not die, but live and proclaim the works of the Lord—for the soul sickness of a saint is not unto death! He shall be recovered from it and he shall sing of the Lord whose name is, “Jehovah Rophi, the Lord That Heals You.” Oh, child of God, if you are in a sick and sorrowing state, cry mightily unto your Lord and the Sun of Righteousness shall arise upon you with healing in His wings!

Note, again, that the children of God, according to our text, may be in a condition of bondage, for it is said that when the Sun of Righteousness arises, “they shall go forth as calves of the stall.” Understand the figure. The calf in the stall is shut up, tied up with a halter at night, but when the sun rises, the calf goes forth to the pasture. The young bullock is set free! So the child of God may be in bondage. The remembrance of past sins and present unbelief may halter him up and keep him in the stall, but when the Lord reveals Himself, he is set free! Even true children of God may sometimes have to cry like Paul that they are sold under sin. They may forget the blood of redemption for a season and think themselves still to be slaves—and yet they are the true children of God. Hence the beauty of the promise that they shall go forth.

Yes, and there is more in the text. The children of God may be in such a state that they are not growing, for else we should not have the promise, “You shall go forth and grow up” when the Sun of Righteousness shall shine. Do you, my dear Brother, feel as if you had not grown in Grace for months? You need the Sun of Righteousness to shine upon you and you will grow as the plants do! The trees are all bare in winter and their branches apparently dead—but bring us the spring sun and the buds will begin to swell, the leaves will appear and the trees shall blossom and yield fruit! So shall it be with you. The Lord has not left you! You may have stopped growing for a while, but you shall grow again!

Once more, the child of God may get into such a condition that he has lost his joy, for I will tell you a secret about the text—it might be and probably *ought* to be translated, for the Septuagint has it so, and the Hebrew has that force, “They shall go forth *and leap like calves of the stall.*” The young cattle may have been kept under cover in the winter, but when the sun brings the spring, the fields are green and you let the calves loose. There is joy about the creatures’ movements! Even so, when the Lord ap-

pears to His people, they move with delight and dance for joy of heart! The Lord's love within them shall make them give expression to their joy! I pray that you may feel this intense delight in Gospel liberty and leap for joy!

Thus I have described the people to whom the promise comes.

II. My second and most pleasing duty is TO OPEN UP THE PROMISE ITSELF. "The Sun of Righteousness shall arise." Child of God in the dark, in prison, ungrowing and unhappy, what a promise is here for you! "The Sun of Righteousness shall arise." His rising is to do it all! There is nothing for *you* to do—no *works* for you to perform in order to get the needed blessing. The Sun of Righteousness shall arise! Now, the rising of the sun is one of the most wonderful things in Nature, not merely for its grandeur and beauty, but for its sublime display of strength. Who could hold back the horses of the sun? What hand could block the golden wheel of his chariot, or bid him stay his course?

The time is come for him to rise and lo, he delights the world with dawn! Holy Spirit, such is Your power! When it is Your time to work, who can stand against You? As the sun floods the whole earth with his splendor and no power can hinder his movements, so will the Holy Spirit work and none can stop Him. Plead then, this promise tonight and cry—"O Sun of Righteousness, arise upon those that fear You! Come in all Your majesty and wealth of Grace! Pour upon us Your light and heat and life and fill this place with Your Glory!"

Now mark what will be the result of His rising. As soon as ever this Sun is up and Christ begins to shine upon His people, they enjoy a clear light! They were in the dark before, but they are in the light, now! I have been living, for a while, in a country where the sun is everything. The temperature and the atmosphere are made salubrious and delicious, I had almost said celestial, by his presence. When he shines not, the sick pine and the healthy are gloomy! But when clouds no longer veil his face, we are as in the garden of the Lord! Everything depends upon the sun! Step down into a valley where he has not shone and you will find frost—cross the street into the shade and you shiver in the cold.

So clear does the atmosphere become through the removal of all fogs and mists that sometimes we have seen a hundred miles across the sea, rising up like a fair vision, the distant mountains of Corsica! I cannot help using the illustration because it is so distinctly before me! When the Sun of Righteousness arises upon a Christian and shines full upon him, he does not see islands a hundred miles away, but he sees the golden gates of the Celestial City, the King in His beauty and the land that is very far off—for the Presence of Christ endears the atmosphere and enables us to see the invisible! Unto you that fear His name may the Sun of Righteousness arise and give you just such clearness and light!

But according to the text, the Sun of Righteousness, when He rises on those that fear the Lord, gives them healing. There is healing in His wings. By the wings of the sun are meant the beams that shoot up from it into the air, or seem to slant down from it when it is aloft in the sky. There is really healing to men's bodies in the sun. Have we not seen them come to the sunny land consumptive, doubled with weakness—and as they have

sat in the sun and warmed themselves for a few weeks, the wounds within the lungs have begun to heal and the consumptive man has breathed again and you have seen that he would live? Some have gone there who scarcely could speak and beneath the sun they began to speak again, like men whose youth has been renewed! The sun is the great physician. Where he enters not the physician will be needed, but where he shines, men speedily revive.

As for the Sun of Righteousness, oh, how He heals the sick! I would like you sick Christians to sit in His sunlight by the year together, if you did nothing else but bask there as animals delight to bask in the sun. The flowers know the sun and they turn their cups to him and drink in of the health he gives them from his golden store. Oh, that we had as much sense to know the Sun of Righteousness, that we might by prayer, meditation and holy living, bask and sun ourselves in His delicious beams! We shall be strong, indeed, if He rises upon us with healing in His wings. He has risen, but we wander into the shade! He has risen, but we get into the ice wells of worldliness and sin—and shut out His warmth—and then we wonder why we are sick, but sick we always shall be till we come out into the Light again and Jesus shines on us from morn till eve!

I must not enlarge upon any one point, for my time is limited, but I would have you notice how the text says that when the Sun of Righteousness shines, the Christian gets his liberty. “You shall go forth.” I have been staying where the invalid does not venture out if the wind blows and if there is a little chill and the sun is not bright he must stay indoors or lose the benefit he has received. But when the sun is out and the air is calm, then he goes forth and leaves his bedroom and is all alive once more. There are Christians who have been kept indoors a long time. They have not walked the length of the promise, nor spied out the breadth of the Covenant, nor climbed to the top of Pisgah to gaze upon the landscape!

O Beloved, if the Sun of righteousness, even the Lord Jesus, shall shine upon you, you will go forth not only to enjoy Christian life, but to enter into Christian service—and you will go further afield to bring others to Christ! Then you will begin to grow! That is another effect of the sun and how wonderfully the sunlight makes things grow. Here we have in our hot-houses little plants that we think so wonderful that we show them to our friends and put them on our tables as rarities. But I have seen them in the sunny south 10 times as large growing in the open fields because the sun has looked upon them! The rarities of our country are the commonplaces of the land of the sun!

I have known Christians who have received a little faith and been perfectly astonished at it—and God has blessed them with a little love to Jesus—and they have felt as though they were splendid saints! But if they lived in the sunlight they might move mountains by their faith and their love would lead them to devote their whole life to Jesus—and yet they would not be astonished. The Sun of Righteousness can produce fruits rich and rare. Our cold, sunless land, beneath its cloud and fog—what can it yield in the winter? In more favored parts of the earth, even in our winter, the trees are golden with fruits. So is it with the soul. What can it

grow if it lives in worldliness? What can it produce if it lives to itself? But when it knows the love of Jesus and the power of His Grace, even in its worst estate it brings forth the richest and the rarest fruit to the glory of His Grace!

I shall close by exhorting my fellow Church members to live in the sunlight. Get out of the shadows! There are dreary glens in this world where the sun never shines—they are called glens of pleasure and sometimes the pale moon looks down on them with sickly ray. But the saint knows the light of the sun from the light of the world's moon. Get away from those chill places into the clear light. "But," says one, "I did not know there were joys in religion." My dear Friend, do you know true religion, then? For it is, "a thing of beauty and a joy forever." He who knows not Christ has seen the sun, but till he has known Him, he has seen but the glow-worm's glitter! Peace, deep peace, he never knew who never knew the power of the blood! And joy, real joy, such as angels call joy, he never knew who never trusted in the Savior's atoning Sacrifice!

Oh, come you depressed and distressed and despondent ones whose religion has been slavery and whose profession has been bondage—get a true Baptism into Christ by faith in Him and when you have been plunged into the Godhead's deepest sea, then shall you know a joy and peace which pass all understanding! The world gives them not—it cannot take them away. "Unto you that fear the Lord, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings." I want to encourage those who fear the Lord a little, I mean the *seekers*. Come into the Light! Come and welcome! None will question your right! I never heard of anybody, yet, who said, "I must not sit in the sun. The sun is not mine."

The lords of this world have hedged in every acre and there is scarcely a sterile mountainside which is not guarded with, "trespassers beware." But they cannot hedge in the blessed sunlight! No, not even for an hour. Through the poor man's window, though the glass is broken and stuffed up with rags, a beam of sunlight will pierce its way as gladly as into the halls of monarchs! It shines on the beggar's rags as well as on the prince's scarlet and it is free! When Diogenes bade Alexander get out of his sunlight, he had a right to do so, for the sunlight belonged as much to Diogenes in his tub as to Alexander who had conquered a world! O meanest of the mean in your own judgment; lowest of the low in your own esteem; guiltiest of the guilty as your conscience calls you before God—know that the Sun of Righteousness has risen and His light is free!

Come into the sunlight! Come into the sunlight! "Oh, but I shall get better soon. I am sick, but I shall get better soon." Come into the sunlight, Man, for there is healing beneath the wings of the Sun of Righteousness, but nowhere else. "I am kindling a fire. I am hoping that I may get warm by the sparks of my own kindling." Come into the sunlight, Man. What were all your fires? Though you should set Lebanon upon a blaze and take all the timber that ever grew on Sirion to make a pile, what were it as compared with yonder mighty furnace of the sun which has burnt on for ages and will burn on till the last eye of mortal man shall have looked upon it?

O Soul, go not about with your whims and your fancies to save yourself! Come into the sunlight! Come into the sunlight, Man! "But perhaps I may not." Who is the poorer if the sunlight shines on you? There is enough for others even though it pours its floods on you. The sun is no brighter if you have not his beams! He will be no duller though you and a thousand like you should lie by the century together basking in his light. So with Jesus! "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." If you take all the mercy that can be needed to lift you up from the gates of Hell, to Heaven, itself, He will have as much mercy left!

If all the merit you can need to save your condemned spirit and make you into a child of God should be yours, as I pray it may, there will be as much merit left in Christ as ever! Why keep back? Why keep back? "But I am so base." Does not the sun shine on dunghills? May not the mercy of God shine on you, you dunghill sinner? You *cannot* be too low! You *cannot* be too vile! The infinite mercy of God, like the infinite light of the sun, can reach you. "Alas, I am dark." And what night was too dark for the sun to turn it into day? "Alas, I am cold." But what iceberg was too cold for the sun to thaw it? What winter was too severe for the sun to turn it into summer?

Yield yourself up, you icicle! Yield to the sun and it will melt you. Yield yourself up, you dead and shriveled twig, to that dear sunbeam which waits to kiss you and it will awaken life within you, and warm you till you shall be loaded with rich fruit, to the praise and glory of the Sun of Righteousness which has risen upon you! The Lord grant it may be so with us all, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Malachi 3, 4.*
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—795, 799, 19.**

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

DEAR FRIENDS—Although I am still weak upon my knees, I am so greatly refreshed in spirit that I feel able to return to preach on Sunday, April 13. Glad tidings of the Lord's work at home have greatly cheered me and I am also rejoiced that most of the work committed to me has prospered during my absence. This is a great point gained, for now all will know that the work is a living one and does not depend upon personal oversight. I heartily thank all the workers and givers, and most of all our gracious God who has kept them faithful. Right glad shall I be to see the beloved Tabernacle people again. I beg to be daily remembered in prayer and I am
Yours to serve,

C.H. SPURGEON

Mentone, March 14, 1879

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

BRIGHT PROSPECTS FOR YOUNG BELIEVERS

NO. 3172

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1909.**

***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 11, 1866.***

***“But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness
arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth and
grow up as calves of the stall.”
Malachi 4:2.***

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text are Sermons #1020, Volume 18—
“THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS” and #1463B,
Volume 25—THE RISING SUN—Read/download the entire sermons,
free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

THIS great promise was fulfilled at the coming of our Lord. There were many waiting for it, like Anna and Simeon, mourning the darkness in which they dwelt and scarcely cheered by a single star, for the voice of prophecy had ceased. Then suddenly Christ came and so the Sun of Righteousness arose upon those who feared the Lord! They went forth into blessed liberty, rejoicing in Him. And afterwards their light was greatly increased in brightness and their life in happiness as they grew in Divine knowledge and holiness. It is difficult for us to conceive the revulsion of feeling which must have come into the hearts of such patient waiters for the Lord as Anna and Simeon. They must have triumphed exceedingly, magnifying the Lord, with Mary, that at last He had come—the Light to lighten the Gentiles and to be the Glory of His people, Israel!

This promise has also had a practical fulfillment in the deathbed experiences of God's people. Tortured with disease, they have been lying in the darkness and gloom of death. Perhaps fears have come in and physical infirmity has been the platform upon which Satan has planted his heavy guns of temptation. But suddenly a wondrous light has surprised them—their dying bed has become a throne of glory! They have found themselves arrayed in royal garments as though it were their coronation rather than their departure out of this world. They have been enabled to sit upright in the bed and to tell others that they had beheld the brightness of the coming Glory and that they had experienced in their souls the foretaste of unspeakable and Divine joys even before their bodies were released from infirmity and pain! Though the body has been bound fast with cords, the soul has mounted up as on the wings of eagles, in sacred rapture and holy bliss! The Sun of Righteousness has risen upon them! Before their earthly sun went down, the heavenly Sun lit up their sky

with a sacred high, eternal noon! And unto you who fear the name of the Lord, whatever gloom may surround your departure from the earth, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings and one day you shall find Him rise even upon your mortal bodies—

**“From beds of dust and silent clay
To realms of everlasting day”—**

your very bodies shall wing their flight to dwell—

“Forever with the Lord!”

While the promise in the text has had these two fulfillments, there is no doubt that it awaits another. We are looking for the return of the Lord Jesus! And though, perhaps, we have no right to expect that He will come today or tomorrow—for there are many prophecies which apparently must be fulfilled before He comes, and which may require long periods of time—yet we are to expect Him and are to be as servants who know that their master will come to call them to account. Perhaps just when the Christian Church shall become most weary. When the hands of her ministers shall hang down through feebleness. When the warriors shall be “faint, yet pursuing,” when Gog and Magog and the hosts of the enemy shall have gathered themselves together for battle and everything seems to forebode a long dark night for the Church and for the world—perhaps just then Christ will suddenly appear in the clouds of Heaven! Perhaps at such a time as that, the Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in His wings and the triumphant saints shall go forth to meet Him clothed with His brightness, sharing in His Kingdom! And as the next verse solemnly tells us, treading down the wicked who shall be as ashes beneath their feet in the day of their Lord’s appearing! Perhaps this is to be the great fulfillment of the text.

But I do not intend to dwell tonight upon any of these three probable fulfillments of the prophecy. I want rather to talk about matters which more nearly concern us just now and to put a few practical soul-matters before this entire congregation, hoping that God may press them home upon some—so that they may find healing beneath the wings of Christ tonight!

I. The text speaks, you will observe, of a certain class of persons—**THOSE WHO FEAR GOD’S NAME.**

The great multitude of people in the world do *not* fear the name of God. They do not care whether there is a God or not. If there were no God, their conduct would not be very different from what it is now. God is not in all their thoughts—they live as if they were their own creators and sustainers—and practically join in the language of Pharaoh, “Who is Jehovah that I should obey His voice?” Now, for such people, the Bible contains no blessing—why should it when they reject both it and the God who wrote it?

But there are some in the world—thank God, more now, perhaps, than at any former period—who *do* fear God. Some have not advanced far in this heavenly wisdom—they are like scholars on the first form at school.

They fear God just as much as this—that they would not willfully sin. They are checked from presumptuous sins by the fear of God and this is well. It is so good a thing that I believe it is like that smoking flax which Christ will not quench! And that man who really fears to sin because God would see him and who desires to do right because God would have him do right is not far from the Kingdom of God if, indeed, he is not actually in the Kingdom!

Others have advanced so far in this fear that *they have been brought into torment by it.* They know that they have already sinned and they dread the thought of the terrible One who has said that, He “will by no means clear the guilty.” They have heard the thunder of that dreadful verse, “Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them”—and they therefore fear God. It is a fear that brings bondage, but even *that* is better than no fear at all! They believe God and they tremble—and we are thankful to see them trembling, for now, perhaps, they will begin to say within themselves, “We will seek our Father’s face! We will fly to Him and ask Him to save us from His own wrath through His Son.”

This fear in some, however, has happily advanced still further. *They have come to fear God with a childlike fear.* Their sin has been forgiven. They have put their trust in the Savior. They have heard the voice which said, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins.” And now they fear God with a fear with which love is perfectly consistent—they fear Him as a loving, tender-hearted child fears to disobey a gracious, kind, wise, loving father. God is in their thoughts. No, more—God is in their hearts! They love Him. They could not bear to live without God—they would be orphans—their Father would be gone! Without God they would be poverty stricken, for their wealth is found in Him.

I know there are some of you here who could do wonderfully well without a God. Indeed, you would be much happier than you now are if it could be proved that there is no God, for the thought of God is a bugbear to some of you and you try as much as possible to shut the ears of your soul against the cry of conscience when it tells you that there is a God—a God who will bring you into judgment for all your actions! Well, the promise in the text is not for you, but it is for those who realize that there is a God and who have respect unto His Word—who tremble before Him and yet who rejoice in Him, having been brought near to Him by the precious blood of Jesus—and having been reconciled to Him by Christ Jesus, the Mediator between God and man. Dear Friend, if you do but fear God, take the text and live upon it! It is a precious hive of honey and you may extract the utmost sweetness from it! Let us go to it, now, and feed upon it as it is here given to us as food from Heaven for our souls.

II. Having found out the persons to whom the text is addressed, let us next notice that according to this verse, **SOME OF THOSE WHO FEAR GOD ARE IN THE DARK.**

They fear God, but they have not any happiness. They are doubtful, timid and possibly they are constitutionally dull and sad. Besides that, they are diseased and need the “healing” of which the text speaks. They are not what they want to be—they have a bad temper to struggle against, or some besetting sin to mourn over.

Now observe the promise that is given to them, that they shall be visited in a remarkable manner by the Lord Jesus and that, in consequence of this visitation, they shall receive the two things that they specially need, namely, light and healing! They are in the dark, so they shall receive light and comfort! They are sick in soul, but they shall receive healing from Christ. *The great blessing promised is that Christ shall appear to them*, but see in what an aspect it is said that He shall appear. He is called, “the Sun of Righteousness.” What a title for our blessed Lord! He who did hang upon Calvary in the thickest darkness was the Sun of Righteousness! He is sometimes compared to a star, but this figure is more full and more worthy of Him. Christ is the center of the universe! “Without Him was not anything made that was made.” By Him all things consist.” As the sun, with secret bands, keeps all the planets in their places and is the great regulator of the solar machinery, so is Christ the great center of the world—and especially of His own Church. Forth from the sun floods of heat and light are continually being scattered. We do not know that the sun borrows anything from any other source. He is himself the source, in his stupendous furnace, of the light and heat which gladden all the worlds of which he is the center and controller. So is it with our Savior—borrowing nothing, but having all fullness dwelling within Himself, He pours forth, out of His own inexhaustible heart of Infinite Mercy and Compassion—floods of light to make glad the ignorant and floods of heat to comfort the sorrowing!

We can scarcely bear to look upon the sun! He is an orb of such surpassing splendor, giving out continually such vast masses of light, if I may use the expression and, oh, who could look upon the unveiled splendor of the Lord Jesus? Perhaps if we could see Him as He now is in Heaven, we might feel as if we were not prepared for so great a sight, our eyes not yet being strong enough to be able to bear the burning splendor of the great Sun of Righteousness! If you could get any adequate idea of the light and heat that come from the sun, you might *then* form some faint conception of the—

“Streams of mercy, never ceasing”—

which flood the universe from Christ, the great central orb of the Love of God! Oh, happy are they who bask in His beams! Blessed are they who walk in His light! Best of all and most happy are they who, like Milton’s angel standing in the sun, dwell amid the very fullness of Christ’s Glory where He sits upon His Father’s Throne!

Christ, then, is the Sun of Righteousness. Now, Sinner. Now, Trembler. If you fear God, Christ will be a sun to you! You will have no need of knowledge, then, depend upon it, for He shall teach you all things! If Christ shall arise upon you, you shall see your sins clearly enough, but you shall also see God and, therefore, you shall see hope! You shall see pardon, you shall see peace, you shall see Heaven! What will not the sun reveal? Everything is in darkness till he appears—but when he rises, everything is discovered. And oh, poor troubled Soul, you see nothing and you know but little until Christ comes to you! But if He shall arise upon you as the Sun of Righteousness, you shall know all that you need to know and perceive everything that is delightful and comforting—and so your heart shall be glad!

But the figure employed in the text is a double one. It is said that sometimes in the East, after a long time of calm, the very air gets putrid and the glowing sand reflects the burning heat till, presently, a refreshing land breeze comes up with the sunrise. So Christ is here pictured as a sun—His beams being like the wings of some gigantic golden eagle—and those wings, like refreshing winds, bringing health to the poor sickly inhabitants of earth who are ready to die. Certainly when Christ comes in all His splendor of Light, for He is “the Light of the world,” He comes also with health to sick souls! Do not believe, Soul, that your sickness is incurable, though Satan may tell you a thousand times that it is! If Christ comes to deal with you, Man, though your disease should be the deadly cancer of blasphemy, He can cure it! Though you should have the fever of drunkenness within your soul, Christ can heal you of that fiery malady! I ventured to say this morning that there is now no hospital for incurable souls [See Sermon #720, Volume 12—THE GOSPEL’S HEALING POWER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] because Christ can cure all manner of spiritual diseases!

You perceive that the text does not say that they who fear the name of the Lord shall be cured of their spiritual maladies by what they do themselves. No, but that Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shall arise upon them and in His light they shall obtain the health they lack! Get Jesus, poor Soul, and you need not trouble yourself about much else. There is everything that a sinner requires in the Person of the appointed Savior. Arise, O You blessed Jesus Christ, like the sun upon the darkness, that some who are in this place may now leave their sins and rejoice in Your power to save!

You perceive also that the way in which those who fear the Lord get light is *not by their raising the sun*—that would be impossible, but it is *through the sun, itself, rising upon them*. Some sinners seem to think that they are to get comfort and light for themselves—but it is not so—Christ must bring it all to you. You are not to bring anything to Jesus, but to come to His fullness to receive everything! Do you understand me, Man? Supposing that you are full of sin, full of hardness of heart and of every-

thing that is bad and contrary to the mind of God, yet if you are saved, it will be by Christ appearing to your mind's eye—and that mind's eye seeing Him—and your soul trusting in Him. And if you do so, you are saved. "What?" you say, "is there nothing for me to do?" There is nothing for you to do in order that you may be saved, but believe in Jesus! You shall do many things *after* you are saved—I shall go on to tell you of them directly—but the work of saving your soul does not rest with you. Christ is the Savior and He will do it all! You are not to help in that work—

***"It is not your tears of repentance or prayers
But the blood that atones for the soul!
On Him, then, who shed it, believing at once
Your weight of iniquities roll!
We are healed by His stripes—would you add to the Word?
And He is our righteousness made!
The best robe of Heaven He bids you put on—
Oh, could you be better arrayed?
Then doubt not your welcome, since God has declared
There remains no more to be done!
That once in the end of the world He appeared
And completed the work He begun."***

Imagine people lighting their candles after the sun has risen! "Oh," they say, "but we may as well add to the light." But do your candles add to the light when you have the sunlight? Do they not rather mock the light? Are they not an impertinence in the presence of the great orb of day? And, Sinner, do not light your candles to add to the light of the Sun of Righteousness! Do not bring your nothingness and your emptiness to add to the perfection of Christ's finished work! You cannot help Him to save you, so do not insult Him by attempting to do so! But just take the text and from your heart, pray, "O God, let the Sun of Righteousness arise upon me with healing in His wings, for I do—I trust and fear Your name!"

I hope this Truth will not pass away from your memories. I feel so concerned lest any of you should miss the blessing that God is giving us just now. I know I have with me the opinion of hundreds who fear the Lord, that God is very marvelously present with us as a Church and that He has been so for some little time. But I fear lest the cloud should pass away before the heavenly rain falls upon more of you! I trust that it will not, but that you may receive the blessing in your souls!

III. Now I must go on to observe THAT WHICH IS TO FOLLOW IN THE CASE OF THOSE UPON WHOM THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS ARISING. The promise to them in the text is, "You shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall."

It is a subject of great anxiety to earnest Church Officers as to what will become of our young converts. Many are added to our numbers who know but little of the Doctrines of Grace. Now you perceive that here is the blessing for them which may remove our anxiety—may all of you who have lately been converted share in that blessing!

The promise is that they “shall go forth.” Of course this means that *they shall enjoy spiritual liberty*. When Christ comes into the heart, whatever bondage there may have been there before, it all disappears in His Presence! Where Jesus comes, He is the true Liberator. No chains are worn in the court of King Jesus! The moment He enters the heart, He proclaims perfect emancipation and—

“The prisoner leaps to lose his chains.”

Yet the realization of this emancipation may be gradual. And a true convert may be saying, “I wish I could enjoy the promises and go forth and walk at liberty in the green pastures.” Well do I recollect when I heard some Believers singing—

***“Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given!
More happy but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in Heaven!”***

And I thought then, “Ah, I shall never be able to sing that! It is too high a note for me.” But I can sing it now and sing it truthfully, too—and so will you who have but just seen Christ, be able to do—you shall go forth in the liberty with which Christ makes His people free!

You shall go forth, too, in *Christian ordinances*. Perhaps you say, “I should be afraid to be baptized—it is such a solemn thing to profess death, burial and resurrection with Christ—I do not think I could dare to do that. And as to going before a Christian Church and avowing my faith in Jesus, I am afraid I could not do that—my lips would be tightly closed through fear. And I could not feel at liberty to come to the Master’s Table. I would be so afraid of eating and drinking condemnation to myself, not discerning the Lord’s body.” Ah, poor Trembler, I know just how you feel! But when the Sun of Righteousness arises upon your soul, you will get liberty in all these matters and will go forth in obedience to your Lord’s commands! If a stranger were to come to your house, he would stand at the door, or wait in the hall. If he were a person of any sense, he would not think of walking into your parlor, or your drawing room, or your bedroom, for he would not be at home there. But your child makes himself free in your house because he is at home. So is it with the child of God, for a child may come where a stranger may not venture to go! When the Holy Spirit has become to you the Spirit of Adoption, you will go forth to Christian ordinances without fear!

So will it be with *the Christian’s inward privileges*. I know you think, poor Seeker, that you never may “rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory.” If you may but just get inside Christ’s door, or sit at the end of His Table, you think you will be well content. Ah, but you shall not have any less privileges than the greatest of God’s children! God makes no differences between His children as far as their privileges are concerned. He will not make us His hired servants, but we, even we, shall feast upon the fatted calf and shall have the music and the dancing as much as if we had never gone astray. Yes, young Christian, you shall go forth! You

do not know what is before you. There is the goodly land and it is all yours! Do not imagine that you are always to be a babe in Grace—you shall grow and become, I hope, a full-grown man in Christ Jesus—yes, a father in Israel! Imagine not that you are always to be like that little green blade which is just peeping up above the cold sod—you shall one day be like the corn in the ear—yes, more! You shall one day be like the golden corn which bends its head through its ripeness and the glad harvest home shall be shouted over you. You shall not always be weak and feeble and afraid to enjoy your Christian privileges. You would not know yourself if you could see what you will yet be! The songs you are yet to sing, the grapes of Eshcol you are yet to pluck, the fair days of joy you are yet to spend, the feasts and banquets, the real enjoyments which you are yet to know on this side of the grave might well make you happy if you could but get a foretaste of them! Yes, you shall go forth—only have Christ as your Savior and there shall be no end to your happiness! Let the Sun of Righteousness but rise upon you and your light shall never be put out!

But that is not all, for the text also says, “You shall grow up as calves of the stall.” That is to say, *these very people who are so timid, now, shall advance in the Divine Life at the fastest rate.* The calf grows very rapidly and it ought to do so when it is put into the stall on purpose to help it to grow. The reference is to the calves that are stalled for fattening—those that are fatted regularly, fatted abundantly by those whose aim it is to make them grow! So the text tells the young Christian that he shall grow like the calf in the stall. God’s ministers shall feed him. God’s Word shall be the granary out of which his food shall come and God’s Spirit shall enable him to feed upon that food and make him grow! Christ Himself shall be that poor trembler’s daily bread, his meat and his drink. He who feeds upon Christ must grow! It is no cause for wonder if the saints are fat and flourishing—and bring forth fruit in old age when they feed upon Christ! Whenever a Christian has to say, “My leanness, my leanness, woe is unto me,” it cannot be because suitable food has not been supplied—it must be because he has not fed upon it—for if we have fed upon Christ Jesus, how can we help growing in faith, knowledge, holiness and every spiritual gift?

I am hopeful, therefore, for our young members, that God will take care of them and that they will surprise us by the advance which they will make. I only hope that they will surpass all who have ever gone before them. Ah, dear young Friends, never take us as an example in stopping short of the Christian ideal! Follow us as far as we follow Christ! But go beyond the very best of us when you see that we come short of what we ought to be. I hope you will be more earnest, more prayerful, more conscientious, more diligent than any of us have been! May the next generation of Christians outshine the present one and so may it continue to be until Christ Himself comes and His Church shall be in her glory! Do you recollect that passage in the Revelation about the woman clothed

with the sun? How bright she must be! But that is the Christian Church—and it is also you, in your measure, for you are to be clothed with the sun. Your brightness and holiness are to be such that men shall know that the Sun of Righteousness has risen upon you! You have not any light in yourselves, but when you receive the light from Christ, take care that you reflect it! How bright should those be who shine in the beams of Jesus Christ Himself!

There is one translation of the last clause of the text which I should like to mention. It is thought by some eminent divines that the word rendered, “stall,” also bears the meaning of, “yoke.” If it is so, then the genuine Christian grows up like the heifers that wear the yoke. That is to say, he is a worker as well as a feeder. He grows, but he is willing to bear the yoke and serve his Lord. I would not thank God for the addition to this Church of a man who would be idle, captious, selfish. I would deprecate such a diminution of our strength, even though it might be an augmentation of our numbers. The members we want are those who are willing to consecrate themselves wholly to the Lord—and to whom religion is a reality! With many it is a sham, a mere pretence, a thing to make them appear respectable, but not a matter which eats up their life and takes away their energy, bearing them onward in service as in a chariot of fire! May you who are converted grow up as heifers that wear the yoke! May you plow to the end of your field and back again—and on and on, plowing in the Master’s service till the time shall come for the yoke to be taken from your necks! The crest and the motto of the American Baptist Missionary Union should be ours—the crest is an ox standing between a plow and an altar, and the motto is—“Ready for either.” May we be ready to be offered up in death or to serve God in life!

Now I have to say this to you who fear the Lord and who are seeking to have Christ in your hearts—seek to get Him as the Sun of Righteousness shining within you. And ask, after you have Christ, that you may be helped to grow in Grace—that you may not be dull and heavy as some have been, that you may not be cumberers of the ground, that you may not be the mere baggage of Christ’s army impeding the march of His heroes—but that you may be men and women who shall be swifter than eagles and bolder than lions—consecrated—to whom work shall be pleasure and loss shall be gain! Who, as the arrow speeds from the archer’s bow, turning neither to the right nor to the left, shall speed onward to the prize of your high calling, thinking of nothing except winning Christ and being found in Him!

May God grant us this blessing now! Let the prayer be breathed, “Arise upon us, Sun of Righteousness,” and then let the other prayer follow, “Make us to go forth and to grow up like calves of the stall, and may we serve You, O God, and receive Your blessing world without end! Amen.”

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

LUKE 10:25-42.

Verses 25-28. *And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the Law? How do you read it? And he answering, said, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself. And He said unto him, You have answered right: this do and you shall live.* Do any of you want to live by the Law? There is the Law. Does any man here pretend that he has kept it? Let me ask any man here who would justify himself by his own works—have you thought of God today? How much time have you spent with God? Or yesterday, how much of your time did you give Him—how many minutes? Would you venture to say that you spent a quarter of an hour in prayer? No. Perhaps if it comes to the truth, you did not spend five minutes. Now, if you loved God with all your heart and all your soul, and all your strength, and all your mind, do you think that five minutes would satisfy such a love as that? Oh, no, Sirs! You that are unconverted give God no love at all—and how can you think, therefore, that you are keeping His Law which puts it so strongly, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart? And with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself”? Have you ever done that? Neither the first nor the second table have you kept intact!

29. *But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?* The Savior then related this incident which I have no doubt was really a fact.

30. *And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.* It was a very dangerous road, a very lonely part—and robberies were very frequent there.

31. *And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.* He did not like the look of wounds and blood. It is a very convenient thing not to recollect the miseries of your fellow men. Do not think about their poverty—it might spoil your digestion! Do not think about their drunkenness—you might have to become a teetotaler! Do not think about their sin—you might have to go and preach in the street to them! You can live so easily and pleasantly, and even be a priest and be called, “His Reverence,” if you are very careful which side of the road you take. “He passed by on the other side.”

32. *And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him and passed by on the other side.* There are some whose looks are evidently esteemed by themselves to be so very precious that when they have given them, they give nothing more! He may have meant, “I will see into it.” There are a great many who are very diligent in their promises to

see into a case, but we do not see much come of what they say. They also pass by on the other side. Neither the priest nor the Levite acted as a neighbor to the man who fell among thieves.

33. *But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was.* He looked, approached, drew near, “came where he was.”

33. *And when he saw him, he had compassion on him.* He did not ask him how he got there, or say to him, ‘Why, Man, you must have been very foolish to travel alone! My dear Friend, next time you come this way, you must come armed. Did you not know this was a very ugly part of the road? And I think you are ill-advised to have been travelling quite so late.’ Oh, we have many dear friends who always favor us with their rebukes when our wounds are bleeding! “He had compassion on him.”

34. *And went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.* Oil and wine—two very good things for external application—and he used them for that. Wondrous healers, these were known to be. They were expensive things, too. He had brought them for his own comfort and he freely used them for this poor man. Then he set him on his own beast—so he had to walk. He accepted the inconvenience. He relinquished his own comfort for the sake of doing good. “And he brought him to an inn and took care of him”—perhaps he sat up all night with him. He took care of him after he had got him into the inn. He did not immediately commend him to the care of some paid person, but he first took care of him. But this good Samaritan had urgent business and was obliged to go about it.

35. *And on the morrow when he departed he took out two pence and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatever you spend more, when I come again, I will repay you.* “This is my piece of work. I want to finish it and as I cannot stay, will you kindly supply the ready money, and when I come again, I will repay you?”

36, 37. *Which, now, of these three, do you think was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, he that showed mercy on him.* Oh, you lawyer, why did you not say, “The Samaritan”? Of course he did not like to use that word! Oh, no, we never mention them—the “Samaritans.” “The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.” So he would not honestly say, “The Samaritan,” but he made a roundabout of it and said, “He that showed mercy on him.”

37. *Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do you likewise.* May we all be enabled to do so by exercising constant love to those who are in need!

38. *Now it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.* There were not so very many that kept open house for Christ. But Martha did. It was her house.

39. *And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word.* She was free to do so. It was not her house. She need

not attend to the hospitalities of it. Her sister was quite equal to it and so Mary did well to avail herself of the opportunity of sitting at Jesus' feet and hearing His Word.

40. *But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him and said, Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me.* She wanted to get so much ready—to have everything nice. So she came almost scolding the Master! She was out of temper, surely, that day. She had gotten to be troubled. Dear Friends, it is not wrong to labor and to work and do all we can, but it is wrong to grow cumbered with it—to get fretful, anxious, worried about this thing and that! You will not do it any better. You will probably do less and you will do it worse. She was “cumbered about much serving.”

41, 42. *And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is necessary. “You have forgotten much. Looking after many things, you have failed to remember the chief, the only necessary thing.”*

42. *And Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.* And so He let her still sit there and hear His blessed Words—

***“Oh, that I could forever sit
With Mary at the Master's feet—
Be this my happy choice!”***

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